

THE ABOLITIONIST

SPRING 2017

FREE TO PEOPLE IN PRISONS, JAILS, AND DETENTION CENTERS • ESPAÑOL AL REVÉS

ISSUE 27: THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY TEN POINT PROGRAM

Letter from the Editors

Dear Readers,

We hope this issue of The Abolitionist finds you well and in strong, resilient spirits. Much has transpired since we originally intended to publish this issue revolving around the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense’s (BPP) Ten Point Program, in honor of the 50-year anniversary of the BPP’s formation last October, 2016. We find ourselves in a different political moment, one characterized by rising fascist tendencies, growing fractures within the U.S. government under the authority of a Trump administration, and ever repressive federal policies that target the widest range of people.

With so much at stake, many abolitionists, organizers, and communities dedicated to resisting the harms of Trump’s presidency and fighting for liberation have iterated the need for people to come together with a shared vision and strategy. Many have even called for a platform to unite around. In considering how we can best defend our movements while advancing our struggles, we take this time to look back to the BPP and their powerful vision laid out in the Ten Point Program.

Though much has changed since the peak of the Panthers, their Program remains an inspiring and revolutionary document. The issues it covers remain as pressing as ever, from the demand for housing and radical education, to seeking an end to the state’s caging of Black people.

Informed by an investigation of their conditions, the Ten Point Program powerfully communicated the BPP’s purpose. In doing so, the document served as a signal to gather forces and a projection to guide their course. The real potential of the Ten Point Program leapt from BPP newspapers and printed broadsides and lived through the experimental work of the organization and the structures they developed to realize its aims. Each of the articles in this paper reflects on the points covered in the BPP’s program through a contemporary lens, drawing lessons for strengthening our fight for abolition, self-determination, and liberation.

We hope that this issue of The Abolitionist contributes to the growing thought and movement seeking to strengthen and sharpen our collective resistance in this current moment, and for the coming years. With pieces including an opening from former Black Panther and current political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal, to an elaboration of the BPP’s internationalism by civil rights and Black Power scholar Robyn Spencer, to the sharp prescriptions from imprisoned writers on responding to Trump’s fascism, we are humbled by the range of contributions to this issue, the historical lessons they draw, and their reflection on current struggles toward liberation in the spirit and ongoing legacy of the Black Panther Party, fifty years later.

**In Solidarity,
The Abolitionist Editorial Collective**



DAVID FENTON / GETTY

MELANIE CERVANTES

1. WE WANT FREEDOM. WE WANT POWER TO DETERMINE THE DESTINY OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.

In the Beginning: The People Demand...

BY MUMIA ABU JAMAL

50 years have passed since the Black Panther Party was founded, and we now see a good crop of books sprouting from the dark shores of consciousness. Many coming from the fingers of former Panthers, many who have held their stories close to their hearts for decades, like Aaron Dixon’s *My People Are Rising*; or Flores Forbes’ *Will You Die With Me?*; or Kathleen Cleaver’s *Liberation, Imagination and the Black Panther Party* (co-edited with George Kat-siaficas); or Paul Alkebulan’s *Survival Pending Revolution*; or Elaine Brown’s *A Taste of Power*. The list, while certainly growing, is actually quite small when one considers that thousands of young people joined the Party and thus there are thousands of stories still untold.

What is common among all of these works of memory?

Almost all of these works refer to something that was central to all members: The 10 Point Program, penned by Huey P. Newton and Bobby G. Seale in October 1966. While Seale tells us that Huey, with his brilliant and fertile mind, wrote most of it, what most of us don’t ask is where did Huey get it?

The answer? The people.

Huey went door to door in Oakland, as did Bobby, talking to the people, asking them what their concerns were. Like many Black people, most of the people in Oakland came from apartheid nightmares in the South, and came in search of something that eluded them and their forefathers for generations—freedom. *Freedom*.

It should surprise none of us that the very first demand listed in the 10 Point Program was short and sweet: “We Want Freedom.”

What’s the very next phrase? “We Want Power...”

Although Huey wrote these words, they were not his alone. They flowed from the hearts and minds of Oakland’s Black community: “We Want Freedom.” It could have arisen in America, and, in a sense, it did. Chapters and branches of the Party sprung up like kudzu in the summer sun, fed by Black hunger for freedom.

From 1619 when the first chained African set foot on American soil, that burning demand was sounded in a million throats, in Spanish, in Wolof, in Mandinke, in Arabic, in Black English, in heart, mind, and soul. It echoes today in the thin, sweet voices of the young who people Black Lives Matter! They are shouting at the top of their lungs: “We Want Freedom!”

In October of 1966, Newton captured that spirit, and wrote down what was rushing through the air.

It crystallized in the becoming of the Black Panther Party.

In his youth Mumia Abu-Jamal helped found the Philadelphia branch of the Black Panther Party, wrote for the national newspaper, and began his life-long work of exposing the violence of the state as it manifests in entrenched poverty, endemic racism, and unending police brutality and celebrating a people’s unending quest for freedom. He is the author of We Want Freedom, a book published in 2008, with a new edition published in October of 2016, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the Black Panther Party’s founding. In We Want Freedom, Mumia combines personal experience with extensive research to provide a compelling history of the Black Panther Party—what it was, where it came from, and what rose from its ashes. Mumia also pays special attention to the U.S. government’s disruption of the organization through COINTELPRO and similar operations. Mumia can be reached at:

Mumia Abu-Jamal
#AM 8335
SCI Mahanoy
301 Morea Road
Frackville, PA 17932

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Ban The Box Movement, **2**
Thoughts On Our Current Political Movement, **2**
Until We Win **3**
Fighting To Win Decent Housing, **5**
Know History Know Self, **6**
The Oakland POWER Projects, **7**
An Interview with Rachel Herzing, **8**

The Black Panther Party’s Anti-Imperialist Vision, **11**
Arming Ourselves With The Most Powerful Ammunition There Is, **12**
Juries and “Justice”, **13**
Malcolm X and Human Rights in the Time of Trumpism, **15**

THE ABOLITIONIST
c/o CRITICAL RESISTANCE
1904 Franklin Street, Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612

Critical Resistance seeks to build an international movement to end the prison industrial complex by challenging the belief that caging and controlling people makes us safe. We believe that basic necessities such as food, shelter, and freedom are what really make our communities secure. As such, our work is part of global struggles against inequality and powerlessness. The success of the movement requires that it reflect communities most affected by the PIC. Because we seek to abolish the PIC, we cannot support any work that extends its life or scope.

Abolitionist Editors

Susana Draper
Jordan Flaherty
Nick Mitchell
Pilar Maschi
Mohamed Shehk
Bryan Welton

Spanish Edition Editor

Luigi Celentano

Contributors

Mumia Abu-Jamal
All Of Us Or None/Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Asar Imhotep Amen
Asian Youth Promoting Leadership & Advocacy (AYPAL)
Kali Akuno
Ajamu Baraka
Alykhan Boolani
California Coalition for Women Prisoners
Melanie Cervantes
Kate DeCiccio
Emory Douglas
Eastside Arts Alliance
Freedom Archives
Lacino Hamilton
Rachel Herzing and Propter Nos
ICE-Free NYC
It's About Time/Black Panther Legacy and Alumni

Kevin "Rashid" Johnson
Nicolas Lampert
Manuel La Fontaine
Vikki Law
Saba "Malik" Makkali
Demontrell Miller
Oree Original
Picture the Homeless
Robyn Spencer
Savannah Spirit
Western Regional Advocacy Project

Copyeditors

Mariella Castaldi
Mohamed Shehk

Translators

Luigi Celentano
Maria Isabel Jeronimo Cruz
Leah Furumo
Iván Dario Hincapié
Nina Iskrenovich
Mauricio Najarro
Susana Orozco
Andrea Salinas
Claudia Saucedo
Benjamin Wood
Gabriel Torres

Layout

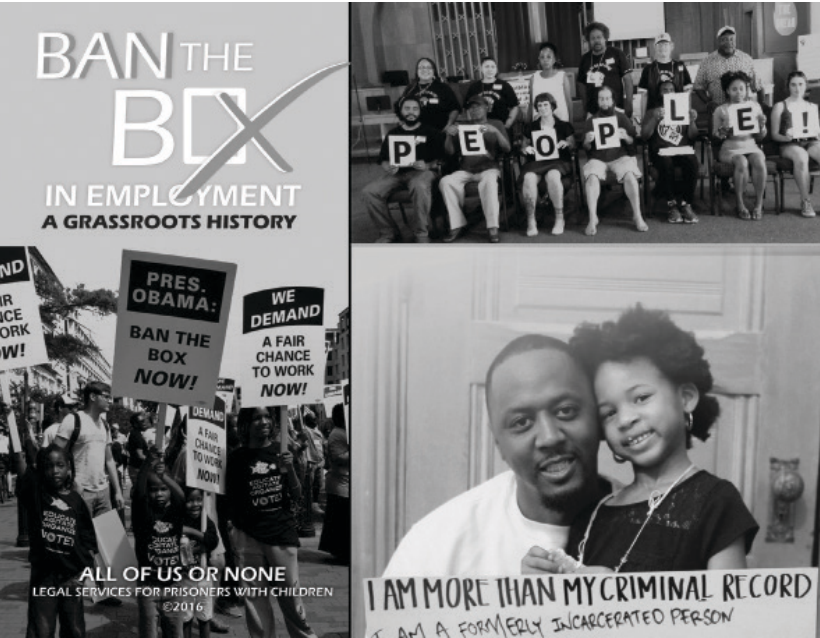
Erik Arteaga

2. WE WANT FULL EMPLOYMENT FOR OUR PEOPLE.

Ban The Box Movement

BY MANUEL LA FONTAINE

The Ban the Box movement is a campaign started by All Of Us Or None (AOUON), an organization of people directly impacted by incarceration, a central tool of what many are now referring to as the prison industrial complex. We are fighting to end the systemic discrimination faced by tens of millions of people in the United States and for the full restoration of our civil and human rights to those who have been formerly-incarcerated or convicted.



Since we recognize that language is the first thing compromised in our struggle to be seen as humans, we have been deliberate in choosing to use language that affirms human dignity. So we refuse terms that do not reflect who we are as complete people, such as ex-offender, inmate, offender, ex-con, criminal, and so forth — all labels which define a person as the embodiment of their past mistakes or the false accusations used to land them in a cage. Instead, terms like “formerly-incarcerated people,” or “people with conviction records,” or “people on parole/probation”, where people is the operative word, describe a condition rather than define a person.

ALL OF US OR NONE

We work towards amplifying and unifying our voices, visibility, and leadership to be seen as more than statistics, storytellers, seat-fillers, or tokens. We demand a shift in our society from a culture of retribution and punishment to one of transformation by challenging the dominant paradigm that prisons are the answers to our current economic and social problems and that individual responsibility transcends social accountability and corporate culpability.

We know that “banning the box”, or removing systemic discrimination from hiring practices allows people to compete more equally with others based on their qualifications rather than the stigma associated with having a felony. So we ask all employers to remove all questions asking about a person’s conviction history from employment applications, interviews and postpone any background check until after a conditional offer of employment. After a conditional offer and presumably a background check is conducted, an employer must determine whether a conviction is directly related to the specific responsibilities of the job in order to consider it. Providing a fair hiring process means that even a finding of a relationship between a conviction and job responsibilities does not mean that employers automatically disqualify applicants. Rather evaluating the candidate as an individual person, allows for formerly-incarcerated people to be meaningfully considered for employment and able to sustain themselves.

Today, nationwide, 25 states and over 150 cities and counties have adopted a “Ban the Box” law, and over 300 companies have signed the White House Fair Chance hiring pledge. Nine states and 15 major cities, including Los Angeles and San Francisco, have adopted fair chance hiring laws that cover both public and private sector employers. This is a grassroots campaign emanating from people who were once in cages, who recognize “those closest to the problems, are the one closest to the solutions, yet furthest away from resources and power.” We ask you to join our movement.

Manuel La Fontaine is a formerly imprisoned organizer with All Of Us Or None, a project of Legal Services for Prisoners with Children.

Thoughts on Our Current Political Moment: Resisting Trump

BY ASAR IMHOTEP AMEN

1.) How do you think you, your community, and imprisoned people will be impacted by the upcoming Trump regime?

I think I, my community, and imprisoned folks will be extremely affected by Trump’s 5regime with a continued modern-day slavery policy. In sum, the prison industrial complex is a very deliberate and calculated product of the white power structure which Donald Trump represents to the fullest. Trump reifies the colonial relationship and power disparity between people of color, along with poor whites. Trumps regime will greatly affect me, along with the community at large as well as all presently incarcerated people. Our bodies represent the neo-commodification in a capitalist system with roots in the original commoditization of bodies of color, labor. Trump’s regime serves a deliberate and specific purpose in sustaining white terror, power, and domination. In other words, the relationship between people of color, along poor white folks in America and the holders of state power in the United States is similar to that which exists between the colonized and the colonial master.

2.) Given this political moment, what are methods of resistance to repression that could be made inside and out of prisons?

General Strategies and Tacticss.

One of the primary first steps for waging a wining campaign is clearly determining who supports what your advancing (your friends), who opposes it (your opponents’ and/or enemies), who is fundamentally indifferent, and who can possibly be moved to support your aims and objectives. With all of these forces you must then determine what are their strengths, what are their weaknesses, and what resources do they have at their disposal. Similarly, we must be equally clear about our strengths, weaknesses and resources.

- * Direct Action
- * Legislative
- * Legal Advocacy
- * Alliance/Coalition Building
- * Media and Public Education

Mass Tactics

- * Boycotts
- * Non-Compliance Campaigns

3.) What can be done on local levels to build self-defense, serve the people, or develop alternative structures of care and governance?

Go study the Black Panther Party Movement history and tactics and use what you can. In addition, go and study other independence movements and use whatever you can. Team up with organizations like the Malcolm X Grassroots Movement and use their playbook. There is no need to reinvent the wheel!

Each of our organizations needs to reach, incorporate, and consolidate more people to enhance our individual capacities and effectiveness to implement our own political and social programs and make broader and deeper contributions to the liberation of all oppressed peoples.

None of our political and social formations has the ability to successfully defend our people from the external and internal threats that we face on their own. This means that we have to rely on each other to expand our overall reach, capacity, and power. This calls for building solid alliances, coalitions, and/or fronts based on a shared agenda, strategy, and principles to meet the needs of the people.

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”
-James Baldwin

In Solidarity and Towards Justice,
Asar Imhotep Amen (aka Troy Thomas)

Asar urrently imprisoned at California State Prison – Los Angeles County. He can be reached at:

Troy T. Thomas
H01001 A-1-137-UP
PO Box 4430
CSP-LAC
Lancaster, CA 93539

The Attica Interview Project

The Attica Interview Project, initiated by Critical Resistance New York City, is seeking responses from currently and formerly imprisoned people across the country. The project will be an online collection of recorded and transcribed interviews, letters, art, historical documents, and other educational resources to support prison closure organizing.

Request for Responses:

If interested in contributing to the project, we ask that you write to us and respond to the questions below.

- If you had the power to take all the concrete, the steel, the money, and the human potential that goes into building prisons that cage and kill people, and decide how to use those resources in a way that is affirming of your life and your community, what would you build? What would you want to see in the world?

- What kind of society would you like to see where prisons are no longer present or seen as needed?

Submission Details:

Please send us your writing, poetry, artwork, or any other response inspired by the questions above. As we compile and publicize these responses, we will not include your name unless you request otherwise. If you do want us to share your name and/or address, please tell us what information you’d like to include.

Submissions will be accepted and added to the project on an ongoing basis. There is no deadline for submissions.cent public, before change will occur. So to that end, you have my commitment and respect.

Please send submissions to:

ATTN Attica Interview Project
Critical Resistance New York City
PO Box 2282
New York NY 10163

3. WE WANT AND END TO THE ROBBERY BY THE CAPITALIST OF OUR BLACK AND OPPRESSED COMMUNITIES.

Until We Win: Black Labor and Liberation in the Disposable Era

This piece was originally published in Counterpunch in September 2015.

BY KALI AKUNO

Since the rebellion in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014, Black people throughout the United States have been grappling with a number of critical questions such as why are Black people being hunted and killed every 28 hours or more by various operatives of the law? Why don't Black people seem to matter to this society? And what can and must we do to end these attacks and liberate ourselves? There are concrete answers to these questions. Answers that are firmly grounded in the capitalist dynamics that structure the brutal European settler-colonial project we live in and how Afrikan people have historically been positioned within it.

The Value of Black Life

There was a time in the United States Empire, when Afrikan people, aka, Black people, were deemed to be extremely valuable to the "American project", when our lives as it is said, "mattered". This "time" was the era of chattel slavery, when the labor provided by Afrikan people was indispensable to the settler-colonial enterprise, accounting for nearly half of the commodified value produced within its holdings and exchanged in "domestic" and international markets. Our ancestors were held and regarded as prize horses or bulls, something to be treated with a degree of "care" (i.e. enough to ensure that they were able to work and reproduce their labor, and produce value for their enslavers) because of their centrality to the processes of material production.

What mattered was Black labor power and how it could be harnessed and controlled, not Afrikan humanity. Afrikan humanity did not matter – it had to be denied in order create and sustain the social rationale and systemic dynamics that allowed for the commodification of human beings. These "dynamics" included armed militias and slave patrols, iron-clad non-exception social clauses like the "one-drop" rule, the slave codes, vagrancy laws, and a complex mix of laws and social customs all aimed at oppressing, controlling and scientifically exploiting Black life and labor to the maximum degree. This systemic need served the variants of white supremacy, colonial subjugation, and imperialism that capitalism built to govern social relations in the United States. All of the fundamental systems created to control Afrikan life and labor between the 17th and 19th centuries are still in operation today, despite a few surface moderations, and serve the same basic functions.

The correlation between capital accumulation (earning a profit) and the value of Black life to the overall system has remained consistent throughout the history of the US settler-colonial project, despite of shifts in production regimes (from agricultural, to industrial, to service and finance oriented) and how Black labor was deployed. The more value (profits) Black labor produces, the more Black lives are valued. The less value (profits) Black people produce, the less Black lives are valued. When Black lives are valued they are secured enough to allow for their reproduction (at the very least), when they are not they can be and have been readily discarded and disposed of. This is the basic equation and the basic social dynamic regarding the value of Black life to US society.

The Age of Disposability

We are living and struggling through a transformative era of the global capitalist system. Over the past 40 years, the expansionary dynamics of the system have produced a truly coordinated system of resource acquisition and controls, easily exploitable and cheap labor, production, marketing and consumption on a global scale. The increasingly automated and computerized dynamics of this expansion has resulted in millions, if not billions, of people being displaced through two broad processes: one, from "traditional" methods of life sustaining production (mainly farming), and the other from their "traditional" or ancestral homelands and regions (with people being forced to move to large cities and "foreign" territories in order to survive). As the International Labor Organization (ILO) recently reported in its World Employment and Social Outlook 2015 paper, this displacement renders millions to structurally regulated surplus or expendable statuses.

Capitalist logic does not allow for surplus populations to be sustained for long. They either have to be reabsorbed into the value producing mechanisms of the system, or disposed of. Events over the past 20 (or more) years, such as the forced separation of Yugoslavia, the genocide in Burundi and Rwanda, the never ending civil and international wars in Zaire/Congo and central Afrikan region, the mass displacement of farmers in Mexico clearly indicate that the system does not possess the current capacity to absorb the surplus populations and maintain its equilibrium.

The dominant actors in the global economy – multinational corporations, the trans-nationalist capitalist class, and state managers – are in crisis mode trying to figure out how to best manage this massive surplus in a politically justifiable (but expedient)

manner.

This incapacity to manage crisis caused by capitalism itself is witnessed by numerous examples of haphazard intervention at managing the rapidly expanding number of displaced peoples such as:

- * Against Afrikans in Colombia,
- * Haitians in the Dominican Republic,
- * Sub-Saharan Afrikans in Libya,
- * Indigenous peoples in the Andean region,
- * The Palestinians in Gaza, Adivasis in India,
- * The Rohingya's in Myanmar and Bangladesh,
- * And the list goes on.

Accompanying all of this is the ever expanding level of xenophobia and violence targeted at migrants on a world scale, pitting the unevenly pacified and rewarded victims of imperialism against one other as has been witnessed in places like South Africa over the last decade, where attacks on migrant workers and communities has become a mainstay of political activity.

The capitalist system is demonstrating, day by day, that it no longer possesses the managerial capacity to absorb newly dislocated and displaced populations into the international working class (proletariat), and it is becoming harder and harder for the international ruling class to sustain the provision of material benefits that have traditionally been awarded to the most loyal subjects of capitalisms global empire, namely the "native" working classes



Black Panther Party Free Breakfast for Children

in Western Europe and settlers in projects like the United States, Canada, and Australia.

When the capitalist system can't expand and absorb it must preserve itself by shifting towards "correction and contraction" – excluding and if necessary disposing of all the surpluses that cannot be absorbed or consumed at a profit). We are now clearly in an era of correction and contraction that will have genocidal consequences for the surplus populations of the world if left unaddressed.

This dynamic brings us back to the US and the crisis of jobs, mass incarceration and the escalating number of extrajudicial police killings confronting Black people.

The Black Surplus Challenge/Problem

Afrikan, or Black, people in the United States are one of these surplus populations. Black people are no longer a central force in the productive process of the United States, in large part because those manufacturing industries that have not completely offshored their production no longer need large quantities of relatively cheap labor due to automation advances. At the same time agricultural industries have been largely mechanized or require even cheaper sources of super-exploited labor from migrant workers in order to ensure profits.

Various campaigns to reduce the cost of Black labor in the US have fundamentally failed, due to the militant resistance of Black labor and the ability of Black working class communities to "make ends meet" by engaging in and receiving survival level resources from the underground economy, which has grown exponentially in the Black community since the 1970's. (The underground economy has exploded worldwide since the 1970's due to the growth of unregulated "grey market" service economies and the explosion of the illicit drug trade. Its expansion has created considerable "market distortions" throughout the world, as it has created new value chains, circuits of accumulation, and financing streams that helped "cook the books" of banking institutions worldwide and helped finance capital become the dominant faction of capital in the 1980's and 90's).

The social dimensions of white supremacy regarding consumer "comfort", "trust" and "security" seriously constrain the opportunities of Black workers in service industries and retail work, as significant numbers of non-Black consumers are

uncomfortable receiving direct services from Black people (save for things like custodial and security services). These are the root causes of what many are calling the "Black jobs crisis". The lack of jobs for Black people translates into a lack of need for Black people, which equates into the wholesale devaluation of Black life. And anything without value in the capitalist system is disposable.

The declining "value" of Black life is not a new problem – Black people have constituted an escalating problem in search of a solution for the US ruling class since the 1960's. Although the US labor market started to have trouble absorbing Afrikan workers in the 1950's, the surplus problem didn't reach crisis proportions until the late 1960's, when the Black Liberation Movement started to critically impact industrial production with demands for more jobs, training and open access to skilled and supervisory work (which were "occupied" by white seniority-protected workers), higher wages, direct representation (through instruments like the League of Revolutionary Black Workers), constant strikes, work stoppages, other forms of industrial action, militant resistance to state and non-state forces of repression and hundreds of urban rebellions.

This resistance occurred at the same time that the international regime of integrated production, trade management, and financial integration, and currency convergence instituted by the United States after WWII, commonly called the Bretton Woods regime, fully matured and ushered in the present phase of globalization. This regime obliterated most exclusivist (or protectionist) production regimes and allowed international capital to scour the world for cheaper sources of labor and raw materials without fear of inter-imperialist rivalry and interference (as predominated during earlier periods). Thus, Black labor was hitting its stride just as capital was finding secure ways to eliminate its dependence upon it (and Western unionized labor more generally) by starting to reap the rewards of its post-WWII mega-global investments (largely centered in Western Europe, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan).

One reward of these mega-global investments for US capital was that it reduced the scale and need for domestic industrial production, which limited the ability of Black labor to disrupt the system with work stoppages, strikes, and other forms of industrial action. As US capital rapidly reduced the scale of its domestic production in the 1970's and 80's, it intentionally elevated competition between white workers and Afrikan and other non-settler sources of labor for the crumbs it was still doling out. The settler-world view, position, and systems of entitlement possessed by the vast majority of white workers compelled them to support the overall initiatives of capital and to block the infusion of Afrikan, Xicano, Puerto Rican and other non-white labor when there were opportunities to do so during this period.

This development provided the social base for the "silent majority," "law and order," "tuff on crime," "war on drugs," "war on gangs and thugs" campaigns that dominated the national political landscape from the late 1960's through the early 2000's, that lead to mass incarceration, racist drug laws, and militarized policing that have terrorized Afrikan (and Indigenous, Xicano, Puerto Rican, etc.) communities since the 1970's.

To deal with the crisis of Black labor redundancy and mass resistance the ruling class responded by creating a multipronged strategy of limited incorporation, counterinsurgency, and mass containment. The stratagem of limited incorporation sought to and has partially succeeded in dividing the Black community by class, as corporations and the state have been able to take in and utilize the skills of sectors of the Black petit bourgeoisie and working class for their own benefit. The stratagem of counterinsurgency crushed, divided and severely weakened Black organizations. And the stratagem of containment resulted in millions of Black people effectively being re-enslaved and warehoused in prisons throughout the US empire.

This three-pronged strategy exhausted itself by the mid-2000 as core dynamics of it (particularly the costs associated with mass incarceration and warehousing) became increasingly unprofitable and therefore unsustainable. Experiments with alternative forms of incarceration (like digitally monitored home detainment) and the spatial isolation and externalization of the Afrikan surplus population to the suburbs and exurbs currently abound, but no new comprehensive strategy has yet been devised by the ruling class to solve the problem of what to do and what politically can be done to address the Black surplus population problem. All that is clear from events like the catastrophe following Hurricane Katrina and the hundreds of Afrikans being daily, monthly, and yearly extra-judicially killed by various law enforcement agencies is that Black life is becoming increasingly more disposable. And it is becoming more disposable because in the context of the American capitalist socio-economic system, Black life is a commodity rapidly depreciating in value, but still must be corralled and controlled.

A Potential Path of Resistance

Although Afrikan people are essentially "talking instruments" to the overlords of the capitalist system, Black people have always possessed our own agency. Since the dawn of the Afrikan slave trade and the

Continued on next page



development of the mercantile plantations and chattel slavery, Black people resisted their enslavement and the systemic logic and dynamics of the capitalist system itself.

The fundamental question confronting Afrikan people since their enslavement and colonization in territories held by the US government is to what extent can Black people be the agents and instruments of their own liberation and history? It is clear that merely being the object or appendage of someone else's project and history only leads to a disposable future. Black people have to forge their own future and chart a clear self-determining course of action in order to be more than just a mere footnote in world history.

Self-determination and social liberation, how do we get there? How will we take care of our own material needs (food, water, shelter, clothing, health care, defense, jobs, etc.)? How will we address the social contradictions that shape and define us, both internally and externally generated? How should we and will we express our political independence?

There are no easy or cookie cutter answers. However, there are some general principles and dynamics that I believe are perfectly clear. Given how we have been structurally positioned as a disposable, surplus population by the US empire we need to build a mass movement that focuses as much on organizing and building autonomous, self-organized and executed social projects as it focuses on campaigns and initiatives that apply transformative pressure on the government and the forces of economic exploitation and domination. This is imperative, especially when we clearly understand the imperatives of the system we are fighting against.

The capitalism system has always required certain levels of worker "reserves" (the army of the unemployed) in order to control labor costs and maintain social control. But, the system must now do two things simultaneously to maintain profits: drastically reduce the cost of all labor and ruthlessly discard millions of jobs and laborers. "You are on your own," is the only social rationale the system has the capacity to process and its overlords insist that "there is no alternative" to the program of pain that they have to implement and administer. To the system therefore, Black people can either accept their fate as a disposable population, or go to hell. We have to therefore create our own options and do everything we can to eliminate the systemic threat that confronts us.

Autonomous projects are initiatives not supported or organized by the government (state) or some variant of monopoly capital (finance or corporate industrial or mercantile capital). These are initiatives that directly seek to create a democratic "economy of need" around organizing sustainable institutions that satisfy people's basic needs around principles of social solidarity and participatory or direct democracy that intentionally put the needs of people before the needs of profit. These initiatives are built and sustained by people organizing themselves and collectivizing their resources through dues paying membership structures, income sharing, resource sharing, time banking, etc., to amass the initial resources needed to start and sustain our initiatives. These types of projects range from organizing community farms (focused on developing the capacity to feed thousands of people) to forming people's self-defense networks to organizing non-market housing projects to building cooperatives to

fulfill our material needs. To ensure that these are not mere Black capitalist enterprises, these initiatives must be built democratically from the ground up and must be owned, operated, and controlled by their workers and consumers. These are essentially "serve the people" or "survival programs" that help the people to sustain and attain a degree of autonomy and self-rule. Our challenge is marshaling enough resources and organizing these projects on a large enough scale to eventually meet the material needs of nearly 40 million people. And overcoming the various pressures that will be brought to bear on these institutions by the forces of capital to either criminalize and crush them during their development (via restrictions on access to finance, market access, legal security, etc.) or co-opt them and reincorporate them fully into the capitalist market if they survive and thrive.

Our pressure exerting initiatives must be focused on creating enough democratic and social space for us to organize ourselves in a self-determined manner. We should be under no illusion that the system can be reformed, it cannot. Capitalism and its bourgeois national-states, the US government being the most dominant amongst them, have demonstrated a tremendous ability to adapt to and absorb disruptive social forces and their demands – when it has ample surpluses. The capitalist system has essentially run out of surpluses, and therefore does not possess the flexibility that it once did.

Because real profits have declined since the late 1960's, capitalism has resorted to operating largely on a parasitic basis, commonly referred to as neo-liberalism, which calls for the dismantling of the social welfare state, privatizing the social resources of the state, eliminating institutions of social solidarity (like trade unions), eliminating safety standards and protections, promoting the monopoly of trade by corporations, and running financial markets like casinos.

Our objectives therefore, must be structural and necessitate nothing less than complete social transformation. To press for our goals we must seek to exert maximum pressure by organizing mass campaigns that are strategic and tactically flexible, including mass action (protest) methods, direct action methods, boycotts, non-compliance methods, occupations, and various types of people's or popular assemblies. The challenges here are not becoming sidelined and subordinated to someone else's agenda – in particular that of the Democratic party (which has been the grave of social movements for generations) – and not getting distracted by symbolic reforms or losing sight of the strategic in the pursuit of the expedient.

What the combination of these efforts will amount to is the creation of Black Autonomous Zones. These Autonomous Zones must serve as centers for collec-

tive survival, collective defense, collective self-sufficiency and social solidarity. However, we have to be clear that while building Black Autonomous Zones is necessary, they are not sufficient in and of themselves. In addition to advancing our own autonomous development and political independence, we have to build a revolutionary international movement. We are not going to transform the world on our own. As noted throughout this short work, Black people in the US are not the only people confronting massive displacement, dislocation, disposability, and genocide, various people's and sectors of the working class throughout the US and the world are confronting these existential challenges and seeking concrete solutions and real allies as much as we do.

Our Autonomous Zones must link with, build with, and politically unite with oppressed, exploited and marginalized peoples, social sectors and social movements throughout the US and the world. The Autonomous Zones must link with Indigenous communities, Xicano's and other communities stemming from the Caribbean, and Central and South America. We must also build alliances with poor and working class whites. It is essential that we help to serve as an alternative (or at least a counterweight) to the reactionary and outright fascist socialization and influences the white working class is constantly bombarded with.

Our Autonomous Zones should seek to serve as new fronts of class struggle that unite forces that are presently separated by white supremacy, xenophobia and other instruments of hierarchy, oppression and hatred. The knowledge drawn from countless generations of Black oppression must become known and shared by all exploited and oppressed people. We have to unite on the basis of a global anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-colonial program that centers the liberation of Indigenous, colonized, and oppressed peoples and the total social and material emancipation of all those who labor and create the value that drives human civilization. We must do so by creating a regenerative economic system that harmonizes human production and consumption with the limits of the Earth's biosphere and the needs of all our extended relatives – the non-human species who occupy 99.9 percent of our ecosystem. This is no small task, but our survival as a people and as a species depends upon it.

The tremendous imbalance of forces in favor of capital and the instruments of imperialism largely dictates that the strategy needed to implement this program calls for the transformation of the oppressive social relationships that define our life from the "bottom up" through radical social movements. These social movements must challenge capital and the commodification of life and society at every turn, while at the same time building up its own social and material reserves for the inevitable frontal assaults that will be launched against our social movements and the people themselves by the forces of reaction. Ultimately, the forces of liberation are going to have to prepare themselves and all the progressive forces in society for a prolonged battle to destroy the repressive arms of the state as the final enforcer of bourgeois social control in the world capitalist system. As recent events Greece painfully illustrate, our international movement will have to simultaneously win, transform, and dismantle the capitalist state at the same time in order to secure the democratic space necessary for a revolutionary movement to accomplish the most minimal of its objectives.

Return to the Source

The intersecting, oppressive systems of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and white supremacy have consistently tried to reduce African people to objects, tools, chattel, and cheap labor. Despite the systemic impositions and constraints these systems have tried to impose, Afrikan people never lost sight of their humanity, never lost sight of their own value, and never conceded defeat.

In the age of mounting human surplus and the devaluation and disposal of life, Afrikan people are going to have to call on the strengths of our ancestors and the lessons learned in over 500 years of struggle against the systems of oppression and exploitation that beset them. Building a self-determining future based on self-respect, self-reliance, social solidarity, cooperative development and internationalism is a way forward that offers us the chance to survive and thrive in the 21st century and beyond.

Kali Akuno is the Producer of "An American Nightmare: Black Labor and Liberation", a joint documentary project of Deep Dish TV and Cooperation Jackson. He is the co-founder and co-director of Cooperation Jackson, and a co-writer of "Operation Ghetto Storm" better known as the "Every 28 Hours" report. Kali can be reached at kaliakuno@gmail.com or on Twitter @KaliAkuno.

KATE DECICCIO

Kate DeCiccio is an artist who makes murals and prints to support movements and communities demanding shifts to power. This is from a series featuring parents who have lost children to the violence of policing.



4. WE WANT DECENT HOUSING FIT FOR THE SHELTER OF HUMAN BEINGS.

Fighting to Win Decent Housing

BY PICTURE THE HOMELESS
(LYNN LEWIS, SAM J. MILLER, MARCUS MOORE, ROGERS)

Fifty years ago, the Black Panther Party (BPP) demanded decent housing. They did not demand shelters, they demanded homes for our people to live and raise families in. Specifically, the BPP’s 10-Point Program stated that:

We believe that if the White Landlords will not give decent housing to our Black community, then the housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that our community, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for its people.



The mainstream US housing justice movement has spent decades fighting for government subsidies, more Section 8, more set-asides for “affordable housing” that never turns out to be truly affordable to poor people. In fact, there is now an affordable housing and shelter industry lining the pockets of developers and shelter providers. New public housing construction was abandoned by the Federal Government decades ago and in many communities, public housing has been torn down completely.

Had we spent the past fifty years organizing the people who need housing and fighting for “cooperative ownership of housing and land,” as the Panthers demanded, our cities would look profoundly different. And it’s not too late to continue following the BPP’s leadership to wage that fight - and to win.

Poor and working class communities of color cannot depend on the US government to solve their problems when state policies are responsible for those problems. Federal, state, and municipal policies have actively supported gentrification and displacement. By subsidizing developers, giving property away to political allies, weakening rent protections for tenants, and failing to prioritize holistic community development, government has facilitated the skyrocketing rents that have led to hundreds of thousands of families losing their homes, and millions more paying far too much of their incomes for far too little.

Mainstream media and popular stereotypes would have you believe that homelessness is caused by individual dysfunction, like substance abuse, mental illness, or laziness - but systemic problems like displacement resulting from gentrification are the real root of our current homelessness crisis. Plenty of wealthy people have substance abuse issues or mental illnesses, but no one is arguing that they should lose their membership in the human family. Rising rents and vanishing jobs are the real problem - and in a country as profoundly racist as the US, it should surprise no one that people of color would be disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis. For example, 96% of families in NYC homeless shelters are Black and/or Latino. Homelessness has exploded in the past fifty years. Throughout that period, neighborhoods where Black people control their own real estate and their own resources have been under attack. Fifty years ago, Black people had more acres of land, and controlled more square feet of commercial and residential space, than they do now. Black ownership is down, and corporate ownership is up. We’ve evolved into a 21st-century form of serfdom, where we are all tenants living not under individual feudal lords, but

corporate ones.

What’s worse, we have the resources to solve this problem. In NYC, the Department of Homeless Services spends a billion dollars a year on managing homelessness. However, instead of spending the money to stabilize communities impacted by gentrification and help homeless people find dependable housing, that money gets poured into dangerous, disruptive, expensive shelters. Here at Picture the Homeless we refer to this system as the shelter-industrial complex. How are most cities solving homelessness? By intimidating and criminalizing homeless people. By making life-sustaining activities like sleeping, eating, and going to the bathroom illegal. By telling people to “move along,” and - if they stand their ground and assert their rights - arresting them, or taking them to mental hospitals against their will, or destroying their belongings.

The violence of policing is a spectrum. The same mentality that enables an officer to kill people without consequence also empowers them to routinely harass, ticket, and arrest homeless people who aren’t causing any harm.

This year, the Movement for Black Lives released its policy platform. Among the many excellent demands outlined there, was this one, with echoes of the BPP’s Platform:

Financial support of Black alternative institutions including policy that subsidizes and offers low-interest, interest-free or federally guaranteed low-interest loans to promote the development of cooperatives (food, residential, etc.), land trusts and culturally responsive health infrastructures that serve the collective needs of our communities.

Picture the Homeless has been working toward establishing community land trusts (CLTs) for years. Mechanisms like CLTs are important because they bring back a sense of community. They can incubate small businesses, creating decent jobs, and they can support community gardens and other alternative institutions. They help people feel safe again, by preventing displacement and creating permanently affordable apartments.

The BPP demonstrated that low-income communities can and will solve the problems that the government won’t. Poor people are doing this already, and we always have. We’re in vacant buildings tied up in litigation, property being warehoused by banks and rich developers. We’re working with community stakeholders to get city-owned property transferred to CLTs. We’re fighting to build alternative institutions that will enable poor people to control their homes and their communities toward self-determining their destiny.

Fifty years later, the Black Panther Party’s Platform is as urgently needed as ever - and homeless people here in New York City, some former Panthers themselves, are fighting like hell for it.



WRAP
.....
Mural in San Francisco by Western Regional Advocacy Project (WRAP)



SAVANNAH SPIRIT

This image appeared in our last issue of the paper with the wrong attribution. This photo was taken by Savannah Spirit, and we thank her for kindly donating it for use in The Abolitionist.

5. WE WANT EDUCATION FOR OUR PEOPLE THAT EXPOSES THE TRUE NATURE OF THIS DECADENT AMERICAN SOCIETY. WE WANT EDUCATION THAT TEACHES US OUR TRUE HISTORY AND OUR ROLE IN THE PRESENT-DAY SOCIETY.

Know History, Know Self

BY ALYKHAN BOOLANI

We always start with ritual—something to remind us that every day is connected, and that our work has a greater purpose. Our ritual is a cacophonous nod to José Rizal, the famed anti-colonial hero of the Philippines. If you listen closely, you can probably hear the muted boom-bap of a beat made from fists-and-hands against wooden desk. And then, without a doubt, you are bound to hear the flared-up translation of Rizal’s defiant words, a chant rising up and through the concrete walls of the classroom, disrupting every class in the hallway, and hopefully delivering a little rock pick-sized chip into the wall of white supremacy, day after day. *No History, No Self! Know History, Know Self!* On some days, the young people chant it with such fury that the principal runs down the hallway to poke his head into the classroom, to be sure that everything is in proper order.

Though Rizal coined the iconic phrase during the late 19th century struggle against European imperialists, the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense brought it into the 20th, and into the context of the United States. In their *Ten Point Program*, the Panthers echo Rizal’s call, demanding an education that teaches “true history” in order to understand “our role in present-day society.” They called for “an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of self”—a radical kind of self-defense in a nation dedicated to detaching itself from a history of racial terror.

No History, No Self! Know History, Know Self! I encourage the noise. I raise my palms higher, as if I’m conducting an orchestra. I two-step to the beat. The raucous reaffirmation, each day, orients our struggle—our chant is an act of resistance, an act of self-love, and ultimately, an act of radical self-defense. I hope that it is a clear and unobtrusive reminder to all those in earshot that schools—as much as we would like to posit ourselves as “progressive” and “formative” sites in the struggle against white supremacy—we are actually far from it.

Given our current historical moment—in which white supremacist violence and hate is literally the basis of state policy, with guidance and support from the highest levels of government—the Panthers’ call for self-defense has never been so relevant. In a very real physical sense, people of color, women, immigrants, Muslims, and many other targeted groups must protect themselves and their families against the terrors of white supremacist violence.

However, to many Americans, the Panthers’ concept of “self-defense” has flipped: it is instead programmed as *aggression*. This repositioning has fueled a single-story of the Panthers as a “terrorist conspiracy,” or as J. Edgar Hoover put it, a criminal organization that “represents the greatest threat to the internal security of the country.” Peddling in the vast American grammar of racialized stereotypes, this single-story replaces the image of a community defending itself against racial terror with one of a black man with a gun.

But, as evidenced by the *Ten Point Program*, the Panthers’ concept of self-defense is radically different than the single-story. Self-defense, according to the Panthers, is the protection and ownership of one’s own labor in an exploitative capitalist society. Self-defense is maintaining the ability to “determine the destinies” of one’s communities. It is the defense of truth, and of knowledge of self; the measured act of possessing of one’s own mind, in the face of distortion and distraction.

This is the Panther’s radical offer: the possession of one’s own mind is an act of self-defense. Violence goes beyond the realm of the physical; we must defend ourselves against *psychic violence* as well.

Since the time of the Panthers, education systems and structures have reflected the “cultural movements” of society-at-large. The 1980’s brought the misguided era of “colorblindness,” where race no longer mattered, and social inequity was a matter of personal responsibility. The 1990’s and 2000’s bore the cheap scent of the “multicultural melting pot,” where the desired blend, devoid of a power analysis, promoted an ideal of racial healing without any social change. Then, of course, the “post-

racial” Obama era—an utterly tragic misunderstanding of race relations, quickly torn to pieces by the white supremacist backlash of the current moment.

All of these eras have two things in common: they are all different shades of a cultural effort to muddy the systemic nature of racism; and they all have had deleterious effects on how children of color learn about themselves in school.

Public schools, for the most part, have remained middle class institutions whose aims and structures have been formulated for, at best, domestication: “success” looks like generations of sleepy, selfish, and uncritical Americans that passively participate in capitalist society; individualistic aspiration over community empowerment. But in poor and segregated communities, schools are sites of racialized caste-making.

“Personal responsibility,” as *modus operandi*, is tossed around a lot. Absurdly, many of the people preaching the gospel of “personal responsibility” are white—as around 80% of public school educators and administra-



AYPAL Building API Community Power

tors are indeed white, according to the U.S. Department of Education. When considering that the financial bedrock of this nation is four hundred years of white supremacist exploitation of Black and Brown bodies, “personal responsibility” is not only an insult; it is an attack. This is a violent rewriting of history, a “broad exoneration” as Ta-nehisi Coates would say, of a people whose experiences have little to do with “personal responsibility” and everything to do with being white.

Add in “zero tolerance” policies (ones that are quick to offer punishment for behavior, in place of teachable or reflective solutions) and neo-colonial curricula (a focus on basic skill attainment, through the lens of the American narrative of constant progress), and we’ve got a nightmare scenario of racialized American capitalism. If you are a Black or Brown student, your education might be broadly summarized by a cold, heartless daily lesson: *take care of yourself, stay in line, leave your culture and history at the door.*

No History, No Self. I am listening to the young person lament for a Black teacher, because it makes her cringe to learn about slavery from her middle class white teacher. I am walking by a “suspension room” that is populated by young Black boys. I am hearing a young person say that they are surprised to have made it this far. I am reading a textbook that refers to enslaved African people as “immigrants” or “workers.” I am cringing as a teacher says “they just don’t know how to be students.” I am walking by a classroom in which students

can’t locate themselves in any element of the room: in their teacher, in the content, in the purpose of it all.

This is psychic violence. The daily lesson is an orientation towards caste.

Know History, Know Self. In the face of such violence, we look to the elders in the struggle for guidance: self-knowledge is self-defense. An education must equip students with a grammar of self, built upon the knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors. As the Panthers explain in the *Ten Point Program*, self-knowledge is a critical means of survival in a racial state: “If a man does not have knowledge of himself and his position in society and the world, then he has little chance to relate to anything else.” Being able to decode society is an act of self-defense.

This is a clarion call to all educators: we need to do more to equip our students to decode and rebuild a society in perpetual denial of its own dreadful history. We have put so much of our intellectual work into building skills and knowledge—and let me be unequivocal: skills matter, perhaps more for Black and Brown children than anyone else. But, equally mission-critical in the broader scheme of liberation, souls matter: as famed sociologist Dr. Amos Wilson once remarked,

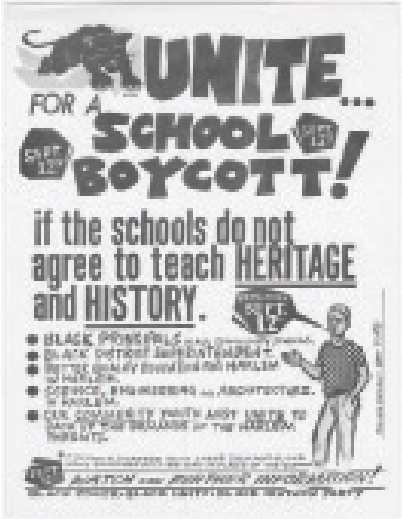
It is not enough to have knowledge. It is not enough to have information. It is not enough to have a job. You must also have a sense of nation; a sense of people-ness. And you must have a sense of place, of where your education and your knowledge and your information fits into the whole, to save yourself as an individual and save your people as a collection.

Towards this end, our efforts as educators of color must be tireless. Our struggle to create as much space for young people of color to find themselves in schools—to see themselves as a part of the project of liberation, undergirded by the resilient histories of our peoples.

The ultimate end of this mission is always love: self-knowledge engenders self-examination, and eventually self-love. Many years ago, a student, at the end of a particularly challenging intellectual day, passed me a note folded many times, which I slipped into my pocket and quickly forgot about. Later that evening, upon finding it in my pocket, it unfolded a series of questions: *What is destiny? What is freedom, if we are bound to social norms of race and class? Is freedom not just a façade of itself? Is true freedom too dangerous a concept for the social structures that actually dictate our lives? Who am I in this struggle?*

I cannot say I have an answer for these questions, and truly, I’m not sure who does. But I can say that this impressive young person—now grown—has a sense of himself in this world. And in locating it, he is, as I’ve heard him say, “unconquerable.”

Alykhan Boolani is from Berkeley, CA by way of Pakistan. He started his career as an educator in Oakland, CA. He currently resides in New York City, where he continues to work as an educator.



SEND US YOUR WRITING AND ARTWORK!

We accept articles, letters, creative writing, poetry, interviews, and art (in English and Spanish). Our next issue’s theme is **anti-fascism**.

Ideas for Articles and Artwork

- Examples of current prisoner organizing
- Practical steps toward prison industrial complex abolition
- Ways to help keep yourself and others physically and mentally healthy while imprisoned
- Updates on what’s happening at the prison you’re in (for example: working conditions, health concerns, lockdowns)
- Legal strategies and important cases that impact prisoners
- Alternatives to policing, punishment, and prison
- Experiences of life after imprisonment
- Your opinion about a piece published in a recent issue

What to Submit

- Articles should not be more than 1,500 words (about 5 handwritten pages)
- Letters should not be more than 250 words
- Empowering artwork that will print well

How to Submit

- If you want your name and address printed with your article, please include it as you would like it printed. If you do not wish to have your name or address included, please let us know that when you submit your piece
- If possible, send a copy of your submission, not the original

Writing Suggestions

- Try to write an outline before you write the piece. Ask yourself: does the first paragraph tell the reader what the article is about? Do the middle paragraphs support and strengthen the main argument. Does the last paragraph have a conclusion and some suggestions for action?
- Even if writing is difficult for you, your ideas are worth the struggle. Try reading your piece out loud to yourself or sharing it with someone else. Doing this might help you clarify the ideas in your submission.

Send your submission to:

The Abolitionist (c/o Critical Resistance)
1904 Franklin St., Suite 504
Oakland, CA 94612

6. WE WANT COMPLETELY FREE HEALTH CARE FOR ALL BLACK AND OPPRESSED PEOPLE.

The Oakland POWER Projects

Decoupling Policing from Health Services: Empowering Healthworkers as Anti-Policing Organizers

Policing is Failing Oakland.

The Oakland Power Projects helps Oakland residents invest in practices, relationships, and resources that build community power and wellbeing. By identifying current harms, amplifying existing resources, and developing new practices that do not rely on policing solutions, the projects remind us that we can make our families and neighborhoods safe and healthy without relying on the cops.

The Oakland Power Projects (OPP) builds the capacity for Oakland residents to reject police and policing as the default response to harm and to highlight or create alternatives that actually work by identifying current harms, amplifying existing resources, and developing new practices that do not rely on policing solutions. Through a steady and intentional process, Critical Resistance members talked to close allies from the Stop the Injunctions Coalition to get a sense of the perception and experience of the current policing landscape in Oakland.

Oakland Power Project #1: The Anti-Policing Healthworker Cohort

Policing is a public health issue.

We know from personal experience, stories shared in our communities, and mainstream media headlines that cops are increasingly involved in health-related events, though they are not medics or social workers. The disruption and harm they cause by asserting their authority in health crises or when people are trying to access routine care is increasingly seen as both legitimate and normal. Whether someone is facing a mental health crisis, a social conflict that involves interpersonal harm, a medical situation, or an accident, police on the scene worsen the situation. Cops

are the antithesis of care providers, as evidenced by the many instances in Oakland and across the country of police harming and even killing the person who needed care. At best, the person requiring care (or people in their company) is subject to a delay in healthcare, if not interrogation or harassment by police, detention, arrest, or deportation. With this information and a rigorous analysis of the Oakland political landscape CR-Oakland developed the Oakland Power Projects.

Because policing fails to meet people's needs, and puts people in danger of injury or denial of needed care, arrest, imprisonment, and/or even death, we must eliminate connections between policing and healthcare. Critical Resistance-Oakland chapter (CR-OAK) launched the Oakland Power Projects (OPP) in 2015 to build Oakland communities' capacity to resist the everyday violence of policing and to minimize its harmful impact. Critical Resistance-Oakland (CR-OAK) identified the outrageous and routinely mundane intersection of healthcare and law enforcement as a strategic site to intervene, erode the power of policing, and support access to necessary healthcare, which serves the short and long term goals of stabilizing community wellbeing.

If you'd like to receive a copy of our full report on the Oakland Power Projects, please write to us:

Critical Resistance
ATTN: Oakland Power Projects
1904 Franklin St, Ste 504
Oakland, CA 94612



KEVIN 'RASHID' JOHNSON
Minister of Defense, New Afrikan Black Panther Party-Prison Chapter

7. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE END TO POLICE BRUTALITY AND MURDER OF BLACK PEOPLE, OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, AND ALL OPPRESSED PEOPLE INSIDE THE UNITED STATES.

Black Liberation and the Abolition of the Prison Industrial Complex: An Interview with Rachel Herzing

Originally published in Propter Nos 1 1 (Fall 2016), "Reflections on the Movement Moment," True Leap Press, Chicago, IL.

Rachel Herzing lives and works in Oakland, CA, where she fights the violence of policing and imprisonment. She is a co-founding member of Critical Resistance and the Co-Director of the StoryTelling & Organizing Project, a community resource sharing stories of interventions to interpersonal harm that do not rely on policing, imprisonment, or traditional social services.

The following interview was conducted by Casey Goonan, an editor with the True Leap Publishing Collective. True Leap Press is an independent, radical publishing collective based in Chicago, IL. Casey wholeheartedly welcomes correspondence and may be reached by mail at the following address: P.O. Box 408197, Chicago, IL 60640.

Casey (CG): Hi Rachel, thank you so much for taking the time to do this interview. The specific timing of this interview is important to highlight, as we're now about midway through Black August. Could you possibly explain what Black August is, and why it is so important for people to recognize today?

Rachel (RH): Black August is a call for reflection, study, and action to promote Black liberation. Its roots go back to California prisons in the 1970s, during a period of sustained struggle and resistance against racialized violence against Black imprisoned people, especially those calling for Black liberation and challenging state power. Ignited by the deaths of Jonathan and George Jackson in August 1970 and August 1971, and honoring others who gave their lives including Khatari Gualden, William Christmas and James McClain, a group of imprisoned people came together to develop a means of honoring that sacrifice and promoting Black liberation. While August is significant because of the deaths of the Jackson brothers, it is also a month with many other significant moments in Black history in the United States including the formation of the Underground Railroad, Nat Turner's rebellion, the March on Washington, and the Watts uprising, to name just a few. So there was an idea that this could be a time that imprisoned people in the California prison system could use for reflection, study, and to think about how to strengthen their struggles. During the month, people wouldn't use radios or television, would fast between sun up and sun down, and practice other measures of self-discipline. Eventually the commemorations during that month were taken up outside of prisons, too. Malcolm X Grassroots Movement became the stewards of the commemoration outside prisons, although many people honor and celebrate this legacy and the roots of the practice. Black August is important to commemorate (and I hope that the variety of ways that people commemorate that legacy can be nurtured and encouraged), in part, because it connects imprisoned organizers and revolutionaries with communities outside of prisons that are struggling for similar things. It's often the case that imprisoned communities are meant to be invisible, and essentially cut off from non-imprisoned communities, especially communities of struggle. I think that is an important reason to reflect, as well as to study and honor the sacrifices Black revolutionaries have made over centuries and recommit ourselves to the struggle. Black August provides one important vehicle for doing that.

CG: On this note, how did the contemporary prison and policing abolition movement emerge? What are some of the major theoretical and historical connections existing between abolitionism in its current iterations and these earlier articulations of the Black/Prisoner liberation struggle just mentioned?

RH: Well I think the periodization probably depends on who you talk to. So since you're talking to me, you're going to get something pretty specific [laughter]. I think it also depends on what you mean by "contemporary." In my mind, there is a long through line of people fighting particularly for the abolition of imprisonment that goes back to Eastern State Penitentiary, which was the first modern day US prison. That was in Philadelphia, 1829. Almost immediately, the Quakers, who played a role in building this institution to encourage reflection, understood that this was a mistake. And Quakers ever since that time have been on the frontline of advocating for the abolition of imprisonment. So there is that old-timey version of it, which links back to the development and the build up of penitentiaries as institutions of containment and human control.

If you jump ahead to the 1970s and 1980s, you begin to see organizations that are fighting for a moratorium on prison construction, but also groups advocating actively for the abolition of imprisonment. For instance, there is a book that came out during this period called Instead of Prisons, originally published in 1976, by a group called Prison Research Education Action Project (PREAP). At that time, they were looking at a national prison population that was 250,000. They thought surely this is a tipping point, we need to take action now. And so, as we know, the imprisoned population in the US is now nearly 2.3 million. So this struggle dates back, then, to the seventies and eighties, and became somewhat quieter in certain periods, but never completely went away.

1998 is another important year: the founding Critical Resistance (CR) conference was held in Berkeley that year. That conference did some work to reinvigorate the concept of abolition, and not just as a thing to organize around intellectually, but to organize campaigns and projects around, as well. It also introduced the con-

cept of the prison industrial complex (PIC) into a more popular consciousness. While that conference didn't form some kind of modern abolitionist movement, it did reignite an energy that may have been less prominent or less active just prior to it. That conference was still very focused on imprisonment and it wasn't until 2001, when Critical Resistance East happened that there was a really strong attention toward thinking about the abolition of the prison industrial complex as a whole. That was kind of at the forefront of what that conference was all about.

I think today, and since becoming an organization in 2001, CR plays a particular role in advocating for the abolition of the entire system—of the entire prison industrial complex—rather than just being a prison abolition organization. CR was really at the forefront in the early 2000s as an organization advocating for the abolition of policing, too. Nowadays you hear a lot more people talking about policing itself as something to fight, as opposed to resisting its function within the PIC or even just its relation to imprisonment. It is more common these days for people to think about ways to live without some idea that law enforcement is a kind of natural feature of our world.

So I think there is a through line there from early Quaker opposition to imprisonment to the contemporary movement for PIC abolition. And like all movements, there are some ebbs and flows to it, but those are some of the key markers that I would use to talk about its development.

CG: What exactly brought you into the abolitionist movement? Do you identify as an abolitionist, or is this one aspect of a larger, overarching framework which

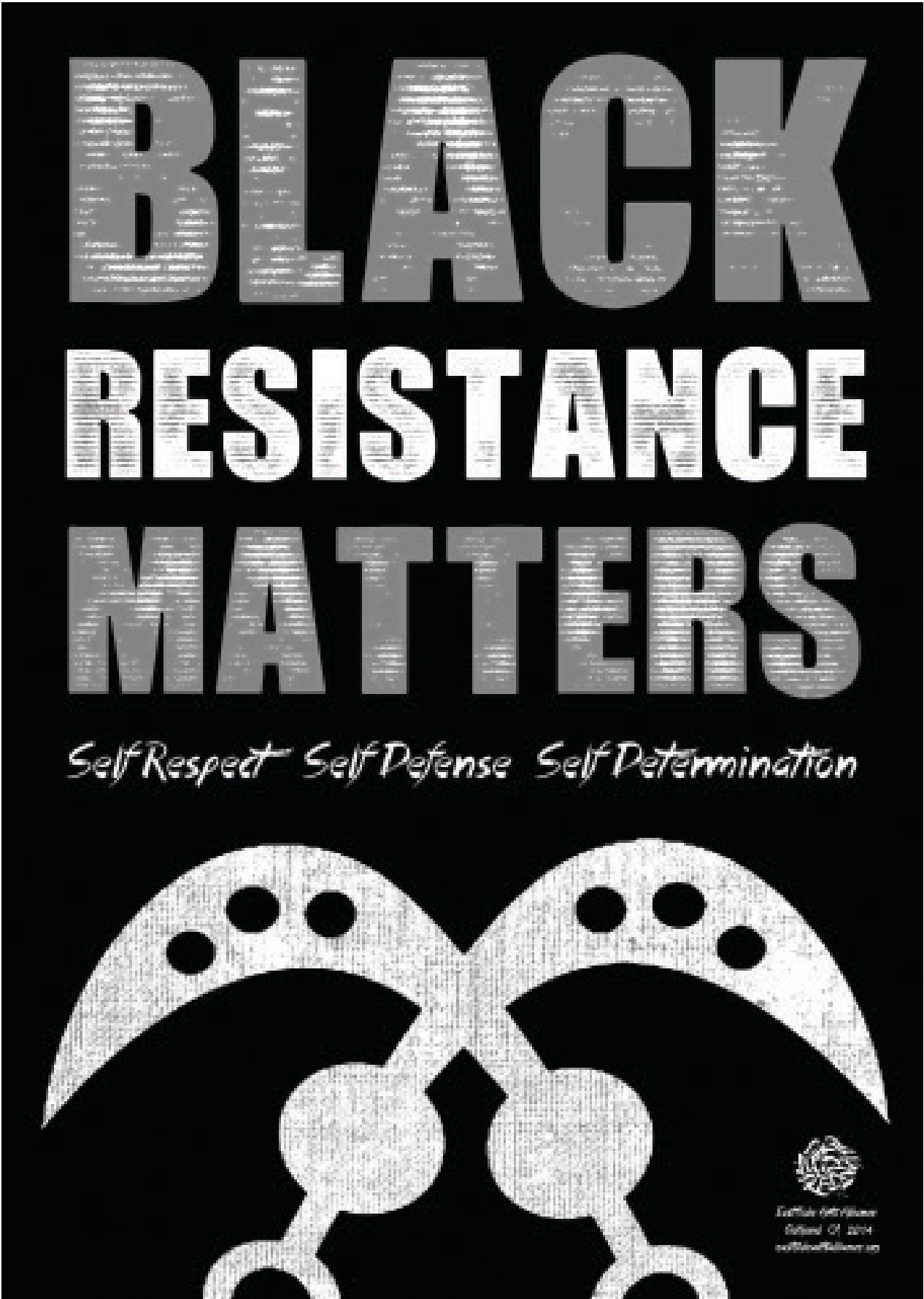
informs your praxis?

RH: I think it is both. I definitely identify as a prison industrial complex abolitionist. I do that work because I believe in the liberation of Black people and I think that it is one of the foremost ways to see that broader goal fulfilled. Without the abolitionist movement and without a commitment to ending mass criminalization, containment, and death of Black people, I don't think Black liberation is possible in the United States—or elsewhere, frankly. So I come to this work as a survivor of sexual harm and law enforcement harm who doesn't believe the PIC makes me any safer, and as somebody who is committed to the liberation of Black people.

CG: You alluded earlier to the differences between a politics of gradualist police and prison reform and a prison-industrial-complex abolitionist praxis. What are your thoughts on framing political struggle in terms of either "abolition" or "reform"? Are there not limitations to framing the conversation in this way?

RH: I don't think it's very useful to position those as binaries. I think it's more about different end games. Back in the early 2000s, Critical Resistance started using a framework that a lot of people are using now, and almost never credit CR by the way (which I hope just means it has permeated the common sense and not that people simply don't credit CR [laughter]). We started saying that the distinction between abolitionists and reformers (or people who either have abolition as their end goal or reform as their end goal) is that reformers tend to see the system as broken— something that can be fixed with some tweaks or some changes. Whereas abolitionists think that the system works really well.

EASTSIDE ARTS ALLIANCE



They think that the PIC is completely efficient in containing, controlling, killing, and disappearing the people that it is meant to. Even if it might sweep up additional people in its wake, it is very, very effective at doing the work it's meant to do. So rather than improving a killing machine, an abolitionist goal would be to try and figure out how to take incremental steps—a screw here, a cog there—and make it so the system cannot continue—so it ceases to exist—rather than improving its efficiency. Whereas reformers, with criminal justice reform being their end goal, believe there is something worth improving there. So the groups have different end games.

I have never understood or participated in moves toward abolition that didn't take steps of some sort. A reform is just a change, right? So there can be negative reforms and there can be positive reforms. You can make a change that entrenches the system, improves its ability to function, increases its legitimacy, so: a non- abolitionist goal. Or, you can take an incremental step that steals some of the PIC's power, makes it more difficult to function in the future, or decreases its legitimacy in the eyes of the people. I think the false distinction between reform and abolition assumes that there is some kind of pure vision that doesn't require strategy or incremental moves. If it is possible to get everybody to open all prison doors wide today, fantastic! If it is not, then what can we do to chip away, chip away, chip away so that the PIC doesn't have the ability to continually increase its power or deepen its reach and hold on our lives?

CG: What do you see being the most significant overlaps between: the past two decades of abolitionist organizing, "Black Lives Matter," and the movement for Black lives in its current phase? I know it's a messy question, because there are folks at the forefront who are situated both ideologically and physically at the intersections between each. Maybe a better way to phrase it is: do you see any tensions or contradictions between the abolitionist work that has unfolded over the past two decades and the emergent Black-led political forms taking shape today?

RH: First off, I want to be very clear: I cannot speak for Black Lives Matter. I'm not a member of Black Lives Matter, I'm not involved in that organization, and do not have the ability to speak on their strategy or form. But I know there is a distinction between them and the Movement for Black Lives, which is a network of nearly sixty Black-led organizations across the US that came together to meet first in Cleveland, and then out of that, have continued to work together. And Black Lives Matter is one of those organizations. The Movement for Black Lives recently released this policy platform, titled A Vision for Black Lives, with more than thirty policy pieces in it.

I guess I would say a few things to this question: First, I think that what we are seeing emerge today—what I would loosely call a Black protest movement, which includes a lot of these organizations and formations just mentioned—would have actually been impossible to come out in the way that it has (to have the foundation to stand on and to have people move in the way that they have) if there hadn't been growing movements against imprisonment and policing in the United States over the previous two decades. I don't know if there is a single set of politics within Black Lives Matter (and I know it's not true within the Movement for Black Lives) that compels an abolitionist orientation towards their work. I think there are some people who lean that way and I think there are some people who lean other ways and I think there are a variety of political perspectives and orientations that I've seen emerge from this broader network. I guess, at various points, I've been surprised that so little attention has been paid to the decades of work (well actually centuries of work, but recent decades in particular) done by Black people and Black organizations to fight the violence of policing in the United States; especially when the protest movement jumped off. I understand that people participating in that protest were fueled in no small part by outrage and in just complete disbelief at the scale and scope of the violence, and that people are being activated and drawn out for the first time. There are some who felt compelled to action right away and weren't necessarily connected to those other organizations or movements.

I think as the past two years have unfolded I've seen, particularly in the Movement for Black Lives, some of that leadership and some of those organizations doing good study, thinking about other Black liberationist platforms, thinking about the histories of Black struggle around a variety of other issues and really broadening their understanding of the violence facing Black people. That is, not only issues surrounding the prison industrial complex, but also the economic, social, and political features of it. I don't know that there is a direct relationship between the previous decades of work—and again, I mean prior work along the spectrum from abolitionist to moderate reform—and these new Black protest formations. I think there is probably overlap of people, probably some overlap of thinking, and probably some overlap of strategy. But I don't know if they are in direct relationship to each other. I would say that while there can be no doubt that Black Lives Matter has had unprecedented cultural significance and impact on US popular culture (on US media and the cultural life of people in the states and globally), it is less clear to me what the organizing impact will be. And in a place like Oakland where I live, there are strong organizations with decades of strong organizing going back to the Panthers and before that set the stage differently than what might be true for other places that have a different history. So I think the longer term impacts of this most recent activism on the power of the prison industrial

Continued on next page



complex over Black lives (and the lives of people of color and Indigenous people more generally) has yet to be seen. That said, I think there has been a change in the conversation. I think there is no doubt that there is a really significant cultural impact, even though some of it is still in the making.

CG: How do you understand the prisoner hunger strikes and other prisoner-led activisms that have occurred over the past decade in relationship to such mobilizations against policing and criminalization in the so-called “free world”?

RH: I think it depends on how you define mobilizations in the free world. I think there is a strong movement outside of prisons and jails. Sometimes it gets more attention and sometimes it gets less attention, but I think it has sustained. I don’t necessarily think that is the same thing as this Black protest strain. Again, there are overlapping people and overlapping players and that sort of thing, but I have yet to see (which again, isn’t to say that it couldn’t happen) an engagement or activism beyond direct action that has meaningfully connected to more sustained organizing around imprisonment.

So I’m not sure that it’s fair necessarily to say “they’re not doing a good job,” because I’m not sure that’s their goal, right? I think the goal is a much more media focused one. With that being said, I think there is what I would call (and this is me showing my age and crab-biness about social media) an overreliance on social media which has meant that a lot of people are just left out. I personally have the luxury to make choices about being on social media or not and the choice to opt out of certain types of feeds of information and conversations. But there are many people who are living in cages who don’t have access to social media. And even for those who do, they might not have access to it in the same real-time that people living outside of cages do. A lot of that organizing, a lot of that conversation happens over Twitter, happens via Facebook, happens via Instagram. So there are potentially millions of people who don’t have a voice in the conversation. Which is not to say that all imprisoned people are not finding ways to participate. There are many who are finding ways to engage. It’s complicated to organize with imprisoned people and there are all kinds of structural and institutional barriers to doing that. Like I was saying, the system is set up to make people who live in cages invisible and disappeared. So it’s not without all kinds of challenges. And again, I don’t know necessarily if that’s their intention or that’s what the mobilizations against policing are set up to do.

But to return to the movement that is meant to do that and is engaged in all of that: the 2011 and 2013 prisoner-led hunger strikes in California really re-energized the movement outside of prisons and jails and activated a lot of people. The strikes gave an injection of energy. Part of that was the inspiration of the leadership of people who are imprisoned in solitary confinement, living under the most excruciating conditions that human beings can imagine. They managed to study together, build bridges across the racial divides that are perpetually stoked by the prison regimes, and were able to engage people outside of cages to take up this call to end indefinite solitary confinement—to get people in conditions that they could actually live and fight from. The work of people imprisoned inside of Pelican Bay, Corcoran, High Desert, Folsom . . . wherever they are living and working, really, was a shot in the arm for the outside movement. And I think that’s sustained and spread. California isn’t the only place, and California wasn’t the first place. You also see Alabama, Wisconsin, West Virginia, Washington, and others. In these places you see imprisoned people using this last resort, their own bodies, to highlight just how excruciating and torturous these conditions actually are.

Pieces like the agreement to End Hostilities that came out of the California prison system and was then taken up by other communities across the state and nationally is an important organizing tool. It refocuses attention to the fact that people are always struggling inside. There are also imprisoned people who are behind the elimination of the use of sterilization on people in women’s prisons, working to increase visitation or organizing against prison and jail expansion or construction. Imprisoned organizers are important players in all of these campaigns and many more.

CG: So, to shift gears a bit, how do you suggest we think about the relationship between struggles against the aforementioned aspects of state-condoned racist domestic warfare within US borders and the numerous declared and undeclared imperialist wars abroad?

RH: There can be no doubt that there is a direct relationship between war-making at home and war-making abroad. While I do not use the word “war” lightly in the domestic context (and I know its articulations are different here than in theaters of combat in places like Afghanistan or Iraq), I do think that it is an appropriate term to use regarding the genocidal practices at home—going back to the first attempts to exterminate Indigenous people from this land, to the ongoing structural and actual physical violence used to eliminate peoples’ access and opportunity to have meaningful, healthy lives. There are some concrete overlaps. There are overlapping technologies, for instance. The weaponized drone that was recently used to kill Micah Johnson in Dallas has been used in Iraq; surveillance technologies once tested out in such theaters of war are used regularly by domestic law enforcement; data collection methods used there are also used here; etc.

I think it is oversimplified to just say: “Oh, well did you know the military is giving extra equipment to law enforcement?” That’s true and that’s a scandal. But that is merely a sliver of where the overlap of interests and warfare practices is happening. The people who are designing war to take place in spaces outside of the United States are influencing the tactics of law enforcement here in the United States. I think you can look at the borders as one of those places where that stuff coalesces strongly. However this is also happening in cities, in counties, and rural areas across the country.

There’s also a way that the logic of law enforcement in the United States is taking on an increasingly explicit war-making tenor. There are very clear examples of this such as the declared War on Drugs or War on Gangs. The enforcement of these wars uses a lot of the same tactics and technologies, but also is premised on a sense that there is an enemy that needs to be targeted and eliminated here at home.

One way this has played out dramatically is with the creation and growth of the Department of Homeland Security since September 11th and the fear-mongering around terrorism that’s used to clamp down on the domestic setting. One small example of this that we have been fighting in Oakland is a program called Urban Shield. It is 48 hours of war games simulations and trainings for SWAT and other special law enforcement forces. The scenarios are incredibly racist, really sensationalized, and millions upon millions of dollars of my county’s money go into these war game competitions. Simultaneously, they hold a trade expo, so you can go and get the latest night-vision goggles, the newest guns, the latest tracking softwares or stingray technology, or robots and drones. In terms of its cultural impact, in this period of increased public attention on the policing of protest you’ll also see things like t-shirts with things like images of protesters in cross-hairs for sale at these trade shows.

CG: While we are on this topic of repression, counter-insurgency warfare, and police spying, could you speak a little bit on the politics of movement security? I don’t mean this as a reiteration of criminological notions of security and securitization. I simply mean, are there certain principles, organizing strategies, or ways of collectivizing political labor that you suggest be embraced, at both organizational and larger popular levels, which can stave off intrusion from the state or the counter-revolutionary aspirations of liberal civil society?

RH: This is definitely not my area of expertise [laughter], but I’ll tell you what I think [more laughter]. I think organizers should always operate on the assumption that they’re being watched, that their communication is being monitored, and that they likely will encounter people intent on provoking people and sharing information to discredit and disrupt organizing, particularly organizing that challenges state power. That said, I think being smart and cognizant of that is different than being paralyzed and paranoid.

My sense is that strong organizations are a good line of self-defense. Strong organizations, strong coalitions, and strong networks. Trying to go it alone, as individuals or as a handful of people is always more risky than being connected to an organizing infrastructure and a base. But people make different choices about what their tactics require and what they think is strategic. I feel quite certain that when things get more powerful they get more closely monitored. That balance between moving forward toward political goals and using common sense caution is really important. I think calling out and not cooperating with law enforcement always makes really good sense to me [laughter]. Calling out visits by law enforcement, not cooperating, and then letting people know that it’s happening—those kinds of things are extremely important. Having consistency in how people get to enter spaces, when people get to participate in decision-making, those basic organizing guidelines used by many organizations for a long time, is also important.

CG: So in the spirit of Black August, I have pulled three quotes from Assata Shakur’s autobiography that I hope to get your opinion on. The first is as follows:

I have never really understood exactly what a “liberal” is, though, since i have heard “liberals” express every conceivable opinion on every conceivable subject. As far as i can tell, you have extreme right, who are fascist, racist capitalist dogs like Ronald Reagan, who come right out and let you know where they’re coming from. And on the opposite end, you have the left, who are supposed to be committed to justice, equality, and human rights. And somewhere in between these two points is the liberal. As far as i’m concerned, “liberal” is the most meaningless word in the dictionary. History has shown me that as long as some white middle-class people can live high on the hog, take vacations to Europe, send their children to private schools, and reap the benefits of their white skin privileges, then they are “liberals.” But when times get hard and money gets tight they pull off that liberal mask and you think you’re talking to Adolph Hitler. They feel sorry for the so-called underprivileged just as long as they can maintain their own privileges.

What comes to mind after hearing this quote?

RH: I think it’s an interesting point. In the movement against the prison industrial complex we have struggled a lot with . . . umm . . . liberals [laughter]—some of the most stalwart reformers where reform is their end game. I also think there is some interesting wiggle room there. What is necessary to fulfill their commitment to justice, and equality, and human rights? I mean, if there is a kernel of that there, then part of our work as organizers is to amplify our shared interests, to compel them in that direction, and also to make that compelling. That doesn’t mean we always succeed or that their class interests, racial benefits, gender benefits or other sources of power they want to protect might not ultimately play them one way or the other. But thinking about where we can exploit that kernel of shared interest is interesting to me here, rather than just giving up and writing them off entirely. Of course we need to be cautious of what they are recommending and what they think is “practical” or “pragmatic.” But it’s our job now to push on that and to make other suggestions.

CG: Here is the second quote by Shakur:

Constructive criticism and self-criticism are extremely important for any revolutionary organization. Without them, people tend to drown in their mistakes, and not learn from them.”

RH: Yes. I couldn’t agree more [laughter]. So yes, what Assata said [more laughter]. I worry a little bit, in this period, about a lack of intellectual rigor and lack of discipline, as well as accusations of working “too slowly” or “not understanding” the sense of urgency. You know, we saw this similarly around the rise of the anti-globalization movement which I also think is a direct antecedent of what we are seeing in terms of Black protest today. Similarly, I would say that about Occupy. I would call that a direct antecedent. I don’t think we would be seeing what we are seeing now without those previous movements.

CG: Like a tactical antecedent? Or something more ideological?

RH: I think both. But I don’t mean a one-to-one overlap, or like: this led directly to this. But more in terms of some of the orientations towards organizing and the ideological parallels. So definitely not a one-to-one, but I think influenced by quite certainly.

I think in these moments where there is a heightened investment in direct action as the primary way to move, the pacing and the urgency and all that is required to keep up the pace sometimes makes it challenging to engage people in longer term planning, or study, or assessment. Because people are really feeling like there is no time to do that. That said, if you don’t engage with decades of previous organizing, if you don’t engage with where you are falling down, then you will make the same mistakes over and over. You will make mistakes made a month ago. You will make mistakes that were made ten years ago. You might make those anyways, but they might be more productive mistakes if you’ve made a commitment to studying movement history. The last thing I’ll say about this is that it’s also [really] hard. Nobody wants to confront the stuff they’ve messed up on, or the things they think they’ve done wrong, not to mention talk about their vulnerabilities. I think that also what Assata is describing is very different than a callout culture that’s like “you’re messed up” or “let me just describe all the ways that you’ve messed up.” I think what she’s talking about is a disciplined assessment and reflection within organizational settings on where we need to improve, where we need to tighten up, and where we need to be stronger and smarter.

CG: This point on the pace and tempo of struggle is so crucial! I am glad you mention it. There truly is, as you say, this kind of militant presentism (and ahistoricity) unique to the so-called “Left” that is as troubling for movement-builders as the gradualist impulse of liberal antiracist reform. This point also makes for a good transition into our final quote from Shakur, which goes as follows:

Just because you believe in self-defense doesn’t mean you let yourself be sucked into defending yourself on the enemy’s terms. One of the [Black Panther] party’s major weaknesses, i thought, was the failure to clearly differentiate between aboveground political struggle and underground, clandestine military struggle.

RH: I believe in self-defense. I think that self-defense and self-determination are really key concepts if Black people want to get free. But also for all people who want to be free. In my mind, there is a certain romanticism of a very fixed and narrow conception of self-defense that I think actually comes from, well . . . actually . . . reading Assata, for instance [laughter]. And that is not to criticize her or people who read her. It’s more to say, what does self-defense look like in 2016, versus in 1969 or 1973? In my mind, self-defense requires an understanding of shared fate. It requires an understanding of how what happens in El Salvador or what happens in Palestine or what happens in the Philippines impacts my ability to fight for my own liberation. Some of that has to do with the nature of US imperialism. Some of that also has to do with what we have learned, over many decades, about the power of internationalism generally, and Third World solidarity in particular.

What is required from our organizations or movements in relationship with these sectors internationally needs to be a determining force in how we shift power. Building a sense of how we defend our own abilities to live healthy, meaningful, powerful lives in relationship to people in similar conditions around the globe is a way of thinking about self-defense that I am interested in exploring further. That includes how we fight US imperialism, or how we fight for food security, or how we fight against large-scale gentrification and the march of capitalism. Toward that end, I think this idea of not being sucked into defending ourselves on the enemy’s terms is important. Building these networks I’ve been describing is one way of determining our own course. It allows us to be proactive instead of only defensive. It allows us to say: “this is what we want to build.” In a lot of ways an abolitionist vision is an example of this kind of proactive vision. It’s not just: “I want to eliminate imprisonment” or “I want to eliminate the cops.” It really is an affirmative ideology and practice. Affirmatively, this is the world I want to live in, therefore I need to take these steps to create the conditions that make that world possible.



The ICE-FREE NYC campaign is comprised of New Yorkers of all backgrounds who want Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) presence completely out of our city, which means an end to ICE collaboration with all New York City agencies. As ICE is a law enforcement unit, this coalition is powerfully demanding that NY’ers be free of the daily police terror that ICE imposes.

8. WE WANT AN IMMEDIATE
END TO ALL WARS OF
AGGRESSION.

The Black Panther Party’s
Anti-Imperialist Vision

BY ROBYN C. SPENCER

When Sherwin Forte considered joining the Black Panther Party in Oakland in 1966, he was not just influenced by domestic concerns such as poverty, police brutality and unemployment. He understood that joining the Panthers was a strike against U.S. imperialism. From their inception the Black Panthers sought to challenge poverty, sexism and racism at home while making common cause with activists in the Third World that they perceived to be engaged in similar struggles of self-determination. The Panthers connected their domestic resistance to the anti-colonial Mau Mau uprising in Kenya, the Bandung Conference, the Cuban revolution, the US invasion of Santo Domingo and the second wave African independence movements in 1960s. Of all of these international causes, Vietnam became a pivot point because of the slow snowball of US intervention, the impact of military involvement on funding for the War on Poverty, and the overt racial discrimination of the draft. In 1966, the year the Panthers were founded Project 100,000 was created to change the requirements for the draft in ways that expanded its reach in the Black community. Harlem Congressman Adam Clayton Powell, called out the racism of this initiative. The specter of the draft hung over Forte’s head and he became one of the first six young men who heeded Bobby Seale and Huey Newton’s call for members after they started the Black Panther Party for Self-Defense in Oakland, CA in 1966. Forte recalled:

“The Vietnam war was happening and I had a choice whether I would go and fight the country’s battles in Vietnam or whether I wanted to take my life and use it to readdress some wrongs in this country. I didn’t see the Vietnamese as the enemy. I saw the enemy as racist America.”

Forte, and others, were drawn to point six of the Panthers’ ten-point platform and program:

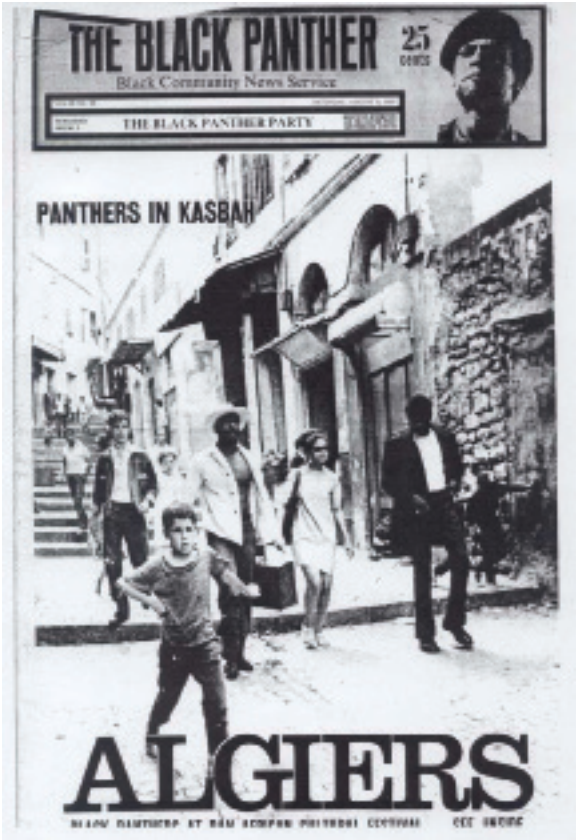
“We Want All Black Men To Be Exempt From Military Service. We believe that Black people should not be forced to fight in the military service to defend a racist government that does not protect us. We will not fight and kill other people of color in the world who, like Black people, are being victimized by the White racist government of America. We will protect ourselves from the force and violence of the racist police and the racist military, by whatever means necessary.”

This point reflects the radical internationalism that the Panthers would embody as they grew from their roots in Oakland in 1966 to become a nationwide and international organization. Although Vietnam framed the Panthers origins, they understood Vietnam an example of imperialism not as a singular conflict. The Panthers leveraged the international spotlight to shed light on America’s racial inequalities, unapologetically allied with activists around the world, and dared to critique US foreign policy during the height of the Cold War. Their actions solidified the relationship between the Black freedom movement in the US and global liberation movements by oppressed peoples of color.

The Panthers boldly moved into the international arena to seek allies. These moves reflected their political trajectory as well as their analysis of the worldwide situation. Panther leaders Kathleen Cleaver described the Panthers’ internationalism as both a result of repression which often forced Panthers to flee the country due to escape unjust trials and an outgrowth of their ideology which allowed them to see themselves as part of a larger global movement. In Europe, Connie Matthews, the Panthers’ International Coordinator, developed networks of support between the Panthers and the European left. Political activists in Germany, France, Holland, Norway, Denmark and Sweden established solidarity committees and organized protest demonstrations and public hearings to raise awareness about Panther political prisoners. In July 1969, Eldridge Cleaver solidified the Party’s global presence by establishing the International Section of the Black Panther Party in Algeria. This International section took shape organically as Algeria became a magnet for the growing community of Panthers who were in exile or mobilizing internationally. The Panthers worked and lived alongside delegations and liberation movements from around the world. Panther leaders discussed potential areas of joint action with revolutionaries from Angola, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Haiti, many of who considered the Panthers to be the vanguard of the movement in the US.

In August 1969 the Panthers’ newspaper, *The Black Panther*, premiered an International news page with a striking masthead containing pictures of Patrice Lumumba, Ho Chi Minh, and Che Guevara, and a silhouette of a rifle. Articles ranged from commentaries and news briefs on the politi-

cal situation in Vietnam, Palestine, South Africa, speeches by international revolutionary thinkers such as Amilcar Cabral, and updates on the activities of international Panther support committees. The Panthers used the newspaper as a forum to draw connections between US police powers at home and abroad. The newspaper was filled with letters from Black servicemen reporting on their attempts to rebel within the ranks of the armed forces and political cartoons which depicted Uncle Sam as a fat, slovenly pig, under duress.



IT’S ABOUT TIME
Black Panther Legacy & Alumni,
<http://www.itsabouttimebpp.com>

The FBI was aware that the Panthers were aligning themselves with the “world revolution” and targeted their international activities. Warrant-less electronic telephone surveillance of Panther Headquarters in 1969 and 1970 was justified by Attorney General John Mitchell as a matter of national security. Eldridge Cleaver, as head of the Panthers’ international apparatus, was poised in a strategic position to make allies with other revolutionary movements worldwide and when Huey Newton was released from prison in 1970, the FBI worked to undermine cooperation between the two leaders and heighten divisions. This assault, coupled with the waves of arrests, detentions and infiltration that had weakened the Panthers for years, resulted in a major organizational rift. Although this is often where the story of the Black Panther Party ends in the popular imagination, it is important to note that the Panthers continued to organize locally, especially in Oakland. And they continued to try to shape the global order.

The Panthers remained a source of inspiration and support to oppressed groups around the world. In 1972, aborigines who had started a branch of the Black Panther Party in Australia wrote to the Central Headquarters to seek affiliation. This same year the Panthers ten-point platform and program was revised to reflect their continuity and changes in their political worldview. Point eight of the new program stated:

“We want an immediate end to all wars of aggression. We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desires of the U.S. ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the U.S. government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars that it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.”

The radical internationalism that the Panthers helped to create bonds of mutual support and solidarity with oppressed people all over the world. They boldly spoke out about US foreign policy and connected the actions of the police in Black and brown communities in the US with the actions of the US military abroad. They took this stance consistency, from their inception in 1966 to their demise in 1982. For this, they faced harsh repression. The state moved to suppress the Panthers ideas, organizing capabilities and very existence. Although the Panthers are not around today, in 2016 activists and scholars around the country celebrated their 50 year anniversary. The Panthers have left behind a rich legacy which has influenced the liberation movements of today.

The increased visibility and activism around state violence against Black people in the form of police brutality in 2014 dovetailed with the war on Gaza that resulted thousands of Palestinian deaths, destruction of infrastructure and displacement. These events created opportunities for heightened awareness, solidarity and mutual support among young Black and Palestinian activists who gravitated to each other on social media and built organizational, ideological and political linkages on the ground in Ferguson, Mo; Detroit, MI; Atlanta, GA; New York and other urban centers. In 2015, the Black Lives Matter organization embraced globalism as a core principal and millennial activists all around the country are taking a stand against the impact of US foreign policy in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean. Other activists like the feminists in the Brooklyn based organization Black Women’s Blueprint are taking to international stage at the Hague and the United Nations, testifying about the impact of state violence, racism and sexual assault on Black communities. The Movement for Black Lives platform boldly states that “America is an empire that uses war to expand territory and power.” The platform critiques the impact of the US war on drugs on South America and the Caribbean; the role of the US in militarizing Africa, including the drone policy in Somalia; and the historical destabilization of Haiti. It concludes with affirming the global movement. “The Black radical tradition has always been rooted in igniting connection across the global south under the recognition that our liberation is intrinsically tied to the liberation of Black and Brown people around the world. This is not just rhetoric as a plan for federal, state and local actions follow. These activists are standing on bridges that were forged by earlier generations of radical internationalist in the 1960s and 70s.



Black Lives Matter visit Palestine

Support Critical Resistance and Subscribe to The Abolitionist!

Your subscription helps us to send the paper to over 5,000 prisoners for free.

- ☐ \$10 for 3 issues (3 prisoners get a free year’s subscription)
- ☐ \$20-\$50 for 3 issues (6-16 prisoners get a free subscription)

Name _____
Mailing Address _____

Billing Address (if different) _____

☐ Please charge my credit or debit card.
Credit card type: _____
Credit card number: _____
Expiration date: _____
CSV (code on back of card): _____
Phone number: _____

☐ I have enclosed a check payable to Critical Resistance.

☐ Yes, please send me email updates!
Email address: _____

9. WE WANT FREEDOM FOR ALL BLACK AND POOR OPPRESSED PEOPLE NOW HELD IN U.S. FEDERAL, STATE, COUNTY, CITY AND MILITARY PRISONS AND JAILS. WE WANT TRIALS BY A JURY OF PEERS FOR ALL PERSONS CHARGED WITH SO-CALLED CRIMES UNDER THE LAWS OF THIS COUNTRY.

Arming Ourselves With The Most Powerful Ammunition There Is: A Collective Memory and Connected Link in Our Long Chain of Struggle

BY LACINO HAMILTON

We Want Freedom for All Black Men Held in Federal, State, County and City Prisons and Jails: We believe that all Black people should be released from the many jails and prisons because they have not received a fair and impartial trial.
The ninth point from the BPP Ten Point Platform

Here we are, 2016, the 50th Anniversary of the release of the Black Panther Party’s Ten Point Platform. The document, drafted by founders Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale in 1966, governed the party. I start with, however, in relation to the eighth point of the Platform, with what appears to be the most obvious: Too many people today seem to believe that prison is acceptable and necessary as long as there are seemingly fair processes and procedures preceding imprisonment, e.g., a lawyer, jury trial, and opportunity to say a few words in one’s own defense.

The Black Panther Party helped produce a vast literature on the inherent racial and class biases structured into all phases of the criminal justice system, along the way building general awareness that the punishment of crime is a political act—it represents the use of physical force by the state to control the lives of people that the state has defined as criminal. In doing so they made the radical choice to redefine how conflict is mediated and justice is dispensed. Unfortunately, today, rarely do critiques or opinions from the Left call for release of all people held in America’s many jails and prisons. Instead, the plea is for reforms that do not substantially assist in abolishing the system of caging people for part or all of their lives.

Prosecutors see Black people all day as “criminal.” They do not want us to have the power to render a verdict. They will use every excuse they have to keep the jury all white, and use all their pre-emptive strikes. They will do this for any defendant, white, Asian, Latino or Black.

Even though the Black Panther Party has received nothing like the intellectual attention devoted to other groups from that era, at least nothing commensurate to the Black Panther Party’s political and revolutionary significance, the 50th anniversary of the group’s founding has sparked new interests and renewed commitment to struggle against state sponsored oppression.

The Black Panther Party argued from its inception that prison served a function previously performed by the institutions of slavery and Jim Crow. Therefore, the Black Panther Party’s demand for the release of all Black people from all jails and prisons was concrete awareness that the institution of prison created the historical continuity to maintain racial segregation, exercise racial domination, and control the Black population.

Few concerted political efforts have been made to challenge the perilous belief that prison is a necessary part of human society since internal weaknesses and COINTEL-PRO brought down the BPP. To do so would be to threaten the establish order. Instead, radicals today have responded to the problem of MASS imprisonment in a way that leaves the structure of imprisonment intact, and wealth and power untouched.

The problem with imprisonment is not that there is too much of it. Prison is a cancer, and any amount of cancer is too much. The problem of imprisonment is what the Black Panther Party was aware of 50 years ago: prison historically emerged as a central institution in Black lives as the states’ response to Black economic dislocation and urban unrest, commonly referred to as crime.

The Black Panther Party’s call for prison abolition was not merely a threat to certain concrete conditions within the prison, it was a basic challenge to the structures of capitalism, colonialism, and imperialism itself. And yes, many groups that think they are on the outside of or standing in opposition to America’s many jails and prisons actually play vital roles in the maintenance of prison by calling for more procedural safeguards—a verbal or posturing level of revolution.

Ruth Wilson Gilmore writes in the foreword of Dan Berger’s book, “The Struggle Within: Prisons, Political Prisoners, and Mass Movements in the United States,” that the overwhelming goal of anti-prison advocacy “has become to find people who are relatively or absolutely innocent under the law, and agitate for their release.” She notes that getting people out is a good thing, “but the persuasive means used to attract attention and gain sympathy often reinforces the deadly belief that aside from some errors confinement reduces more harm than it generates.” This kind of thinking detours anti-prison work into a charitable enterprise—to help the so-called deserving—rather than what it should be: a cornerstone of large-scale fights for social, economic, and environmental justice.

The issue of imprisonment itself, according to Dan Berger, needs to be framed as a fundamental question of building and defending our movements. This is a movement rooted in care: it means supporting prisoners as part of a movement culture where people care for one another, create new bonds of solidarity, and celebrate people’s history. This is a movement focused on shrinking the state’s capacity to repress: it means working to close prisons, end solitary confinement, free prisoners, eliminate borders. It means embedding direct challenges to the carceral state within social struggles while working to popularize a wider set of radical politics.

Abolishing prison ultimately requires arming ourselves with the most dangerous ammunition there is: a collective memory and connected link in our long chain of struggle. Long Live the Power Of The Panther. It requires struggle against all forms of imprisonment, and coalitions among diverse people offer the most promising strategy for the challenge. Especially considering that the state’s repressive use of prions affects diverse populations of poor and oppressed people.

The impetus for abolishing the prison will more likely come from imprisoned people and their families. Their lived experiences often allow them to see more clearly the contradictions between the myth of American justice, and the reality of police, courts, and prisons. These experiences lead them to develop a critical perspective of imprisonment. But those not directly affected by prison also have a role to fulfill in exposing and defeating all the relationships and policies that make America the world’s top cop, warmonger, and jailer. Everyone has a role to fulfill because we cannot abolish the prison system without abolishing all other systems that support it e.g., courts, police, school curriculum detached from everyday reality, how we work, consume, and interact with each other.

This is where the conversation about abolishing the institution of prison usually breaks down. Most people cannot imagine a world without prison—creating an entirely different and more egalitarian system of justice—because most people cannot

envision a totally different set of social, economic and political relationships, a totally different world. Therefore, prison abolition requires new thinking. In the words of distinguished professor of African American Studies, Marc Lamont Hill, “we must radically shift our values so that we no longer equate justice with punishment and punishment with confinement.”

The Black Panther Party wanted us to get outside of the traditional way of thinking of prison as an isolated institution, and begin to think of prison as a set of relationships—it is impossible to separate “criminals” from the circumstances that criminalize them, or prisons from a general lack of imagination and vision. In the infamous words of the late great Black Panther, Fred Hampton, “the beat goes on,” 50 years later. By daring to imagine a world where dialogue is valued over adversarial processes, where justice is rooted in balance instead of seclusion, and where harms are repaired instead of revenged, we come closer to making the eighth point of the Black Panther’s Ten point Program a concrete reality.

Lacino Hamilton has been imprisoned since 1994. After being sent to prison, he spent four of his first six years in solitary confinement. It was there that he began to read, think critically, and distinguish between expressing a desire to change and demonstrating the ability to achieve it. You can write to him at:
Lacino Hamilton, 247310
Chippewa Correctional Facility
4269 West M-80
Kincheloe, MI 49784



FREEDOM ARCHIVES

After the Panthers drafted their original platform, their campaign demands and messaging evolved to include the freedom of women, especially women political activists who became targeted for their BPP activities.



VIKKI LAW

.....
Formerly imprisoned organizers Carlos Roche and Victor Pate. In 2015, CR-NYC and dozens of organizations began demanding the closure of Attica to bring maximum security prisons into the prison closure conversation in New York State. Learn more, write to Critical Resistance New York City; PO Box 2282; New York NY 10163.

Juries and “Justice”

BY DEMONTRELL MILLER

How can a white person truly understand how and why a 15 year old Black child got involved with gang activity and committed robbery? Or how his conditions are determined by the criminalization of young Black people? How can they understand that world when they live in a different reality? How can they understand this kid’s hopes and dreams and struggles to survive? It is easy to condemn another’s choices, but sometimes the only choice we are given is whether to survive.

The Black Panther Party saw this reality fifty years ago, when they wrote their visionary platform. They rightly noted that, while the U.S. constitution guaranteed the right of the accused to be tried by a jury of their peers, the reality for Black people in the U.S. is much different.

From what I have seen, first hand, from prosecutors, they do not want a large number of Black people on any jury. In most cases, they don’t want any Black people. Do they find us too compassionate? Studies, including research done by Reprieve in Louisiana, show that Black people are less likely to vote to convict, less likely to support the death penalty and harsher sentences, and less likely to believe the testimony of police. These beliefs are rooted in actual experiences. We have seen our family members unfairly prosecuted. We have seen police plant evidence. We have been harassed by police for no reason. We have seen how the prison industrial complex has devastated our communities. For these reasons, prosecutors regularly try to exclude Black people from being on juries.

Prosecutors see Black people all day as “criminal.” They do not want us to have the power to render a verdict. They will use every excuse they have to keep the jury all white, and use all their pre-emptive strikes. They will do this for any defendant, white, Asian, Latino or Black.

Police, prisons, and capitalism are devastating our communities. Ultimately, this so-called criminal justice system was not made by us, and it used as a tool to further subjugate us. It is a fig leaf of reason to cover for the continuation of slavery by

another name.

The words of the Black Panther Party are as true today as they were 50 years ago. If the constitution was applied “honestly” – if we really were tried by our peers – the prisons would not be so filled with Black bodies and Black suffering. But we know this is not how the system was set up, and the Black Panthers were exposing this fact through their program.

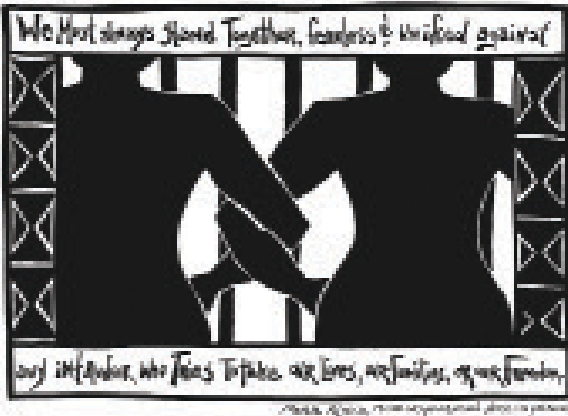
Let’s be honest: Prisons and law enforcement are big business and tools of state violence. To fulfill the demands of this business and maintain the status quo, lawmakers have to be “tough on crime” and prosecutors must have high conviction rates to keep the pipeline flowing. And that pipeline runs right through Black communities.

I am not saying that Black people would not hold a Black person accountable for something they’ve done. That is far from the truth. Being from a Black community, where your neighbor can discipline you, then take you home to be disciplined by your mother, I know accountability is well and alive in our communities!

We still need to fight for the Black community to have what is guaranteed in the constitution: equal and civil rights. This will not end all suffering, but it will be a step forward toward a society where we can hold each other accountable without prisons or police.

Demontrell Miller is currently imprisoned at Allan B. Polunsky Unit in Texas. He can be reached at:

Demontrell Miller #999551
Polunsky Unit
3872 FM 350 S.
Livingston, TX 77351



California Coalition for Women Prisoners was founded in 1996 and they are fierce freedom advocates and a leader in the fight to bring women and transgender people home from prison. CCWP is a grassroots social justice organization, with members inside and outside prison, that challenges the institutional violence imposed on women, transgender people, and communities of color by the prison industrial complex (PIC). We see the struggle for racial and gender justice as central to dismantling the PIC and we prioritize the leadership of the people, families, and communities most impacted in building this movement.



www.criticalresistance.org

10. WE WANT LAND, BREAD, HOUSING, EDUCATION, CLOTHING, JUSTICE, PEACE AND PEOPLE’S COMMUNITY CONTROL OF MODERN TECHNOLOGY.

Malcolm X and Human Rights in the Time of Trumpism:

Transcending the Masters Tools

Originally published on Black Agenda Report on February 21, 2017

BY AJAMU BARAKA 52 years ago on February 21st, the world lost the great anti-colonial fighter, Malcolm X. Around the world, millions pause on this anniversary and take note of the life and contribution of Brother Malcolm. Two years ago, I keynoted a lecture on the legacy of Malcolm X at the American University in Beirut, Lebanon.



SABA “MALIK” MAKKALI
.....
Malik Makkali 099357 Grimes Unit
300 Corrections Way, Newport AR 72112

While I had long been aware of the veneration that Malcolm inspired in various parts of the world, I was still struck by the love and appreciation that so many have for Malcolm beyond activists in the black world. There are a number of reasons that might explain why 52 years later so many still pay homage to Malcolm. For those of us who operate within the context of the Black Radical Tradition, Malcolm’s political life and philosophy connected three streams of the Black Radical Tradition: nationalism, anti-colonialism and internationalism. For many, the way in which Malcolm approached those elements account for his appeal. Yet, I think there is something else. Something not reducible to the language of political struggle and opposition that I hear when I encounter people in the U.S. and in other parts of the world when they talk about Malcolm. I suspect it is his defiance, his dignity, his courage and his selflessness. For me, it is all of that, but it is also how those elements were reflected in his politics, in particular his approach to the concept of human rights.

The aspects of his thought and practice that distinguished the period of his work in that short year between his break with the Nation of Islam (NOI) in 1964 and his assassination in 1965 included not only his anti-racism and anti-colonialist stance but also his advocacy of a radical approach to the issue of human rights.

Human Rights as a De-Colonial Fighting Instrument

Malcolm – in the tradition of earlier black radical activists and intellectuals in the late 1940s – understood the subversive potential of the concept of human rights when philosophically and practically disconnected from its liberal, legalistic, and state-centered genesis.

For Malcolm, internationalizing resistance to the system of racial oppression in the U.S. meant redefining the struggle for constitutional civil rights by transforming the struggle for full recognition of African American citizenship rights to a struggle for human rights.

This strategy for international advocacy was not new. African Americans led by W.E. B. DuBois were present at Versailles during the post-World War I negotiations to pressure for self-rule for various African nations, including independence from the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. At the end of the World War II during the creation of the United Nations, African American radicals forged the possibilities to use this structure as a strategic space to pressure for international support for ending colonization in Africa and fight against racial oppression in the United States.

Malcolm studied the process by which various African American organizations – the National Negro Congress (NNC), National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Civil Rights Congress (CRC), petitioned the UN through the Human Rights Commission on behalf of the human rights of African Americans. Therefore, in the very first months after his split with the NOI, he already envisioned idea that the struggle of Africans in the U.S. had to be internationalized as a human rights struggle. He advised leaders of

the civil rights movement to “expand their civil rights movement to a human rights movement, it would internationalize it.”

Taking a page from the examples of the NNC, NAACP and CRC, The Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU), one of the two organizations Malcolm formed after leaving the NOI, sought to bring the plight of African Americans to the United Nations to demand international sanctions against the U.S. for refusing to recognize the human rights of this oppressed nation.

“Malcolm understood the subversive potential of the concept of human rights.”

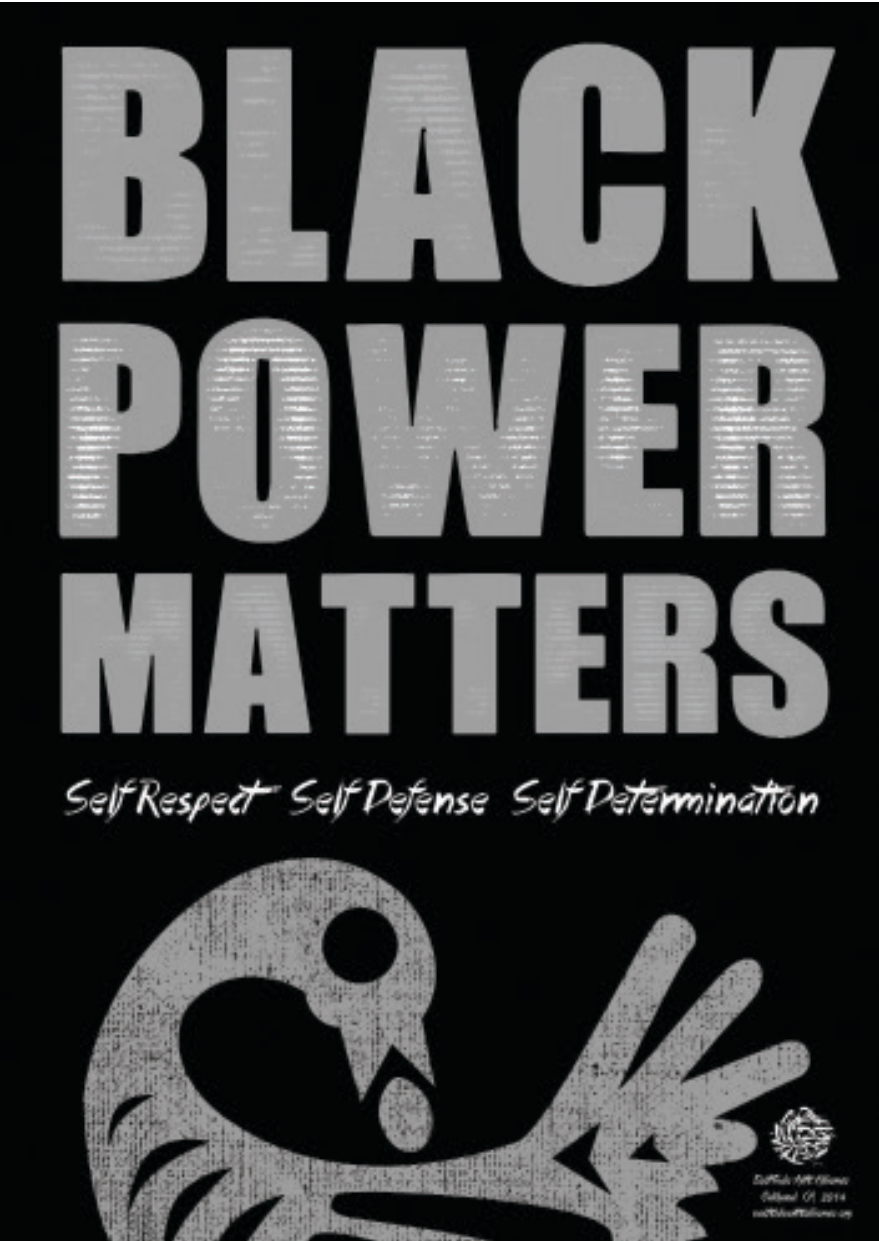
However, there was something quite different with Malcolm’s approach to human rights that distinguished him from mainstream civil rights activists. By grounding himself in the radical human rights approach, Malcolm articulated a position on human rights struggle that did not contain itself to just advocacy. He understood that appealing to the same powers that were responsible for the structures of oppression was a dead end. Those kinds of unwise and potentially reactionary appeals would never result in substantial structural changes. Malcolm understood oppressed peoples must commit themselves to radical political struggle in order to advance a dignified approach to human rights.

“We have to make the world see that the problem that we’re confronted with is a problem for humanity. It’s not a Negro problem, it’s not an American problem. You and I have to make it a world problem, make the world aware that there’ll be no peace on this earth as long as our human rights are being violated in America.”

And if the U.S. and the international community does not address the human rights plight of the African American, Malcolm is clear on the course of action: “If we can’t be recognized and respected as a human being, we have to create a situation where no human being will enjoy life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.”

Malcolm’s approach to the realization of human rights was one in which human agency is at the center. If oppressed individuals are not willing to fight for their human rights, Malcolm suggested that “you should be kept in the cotton patch where you’re not a human being.”

If you are not ready to pay the price required to experience full dignity as a person and as members of a self-determinant people, then you will be consigned to the “zone of non-being,” as Fanon refers to that place where the non-European is assigned. Malcolm referred to that zone as a place where one is a sub-human:



“You’re an animal that belongs in the cotton patch like a horse and a cow, or a chicken or a possum, if you’re not ready to pay the price that is necessary to be paid for recognition and respect as a human being.

“And what is that price?”

“The price to make others respect your human rights is death. You have to be ready to die... it’s time for you and me now to let the world know how peaceful we are, how well-meaning we are, how law-abiding we wish to be. But at the same time, we have to let the same world know we’ll blow their world sky-high if we’re not respected and recognized and treated the same as other human beings are treated.”

People(s)-Centered Human Rights:

This approach to human rights struggle is the basis of what I call the People(s)-Centered approach to human rights struggle.

People(s)-Centered Human Rights (PCHR) are those non-oppressive rights that reflect the highest commitment to universal human dignity and social justice that individuals and collectives define and secure for themselves through social struggle. This is the Black Radical Tradition’s approach to human rights. It is an approach that views human rights as an arena of struggle that, when grounded and informed by the needs and aspirations of the oppressed, becomes part of a unified comprehensive strategy for de-colonization and radical social change.

The PCHR framework provides an alternative and a theoretical and practical break with the race and class-bound liberalism and mechanistic state-centered legalism that informs mainstream human rights.

The people-centered framework proceeds from the assumption that the genesis of the assaults on human dignity that are at the core of human rights violations is located in the relationships of oppression. The PCHR framework does not pretend to be non-political. It is a political project in the service of the oppressed. It names the enemies of freedom: the Western white supremacist, colonial/capitalist patriarchy.

“PCHR is a political project in the service of the oppressed.”

Therefore, the realization of authentic freedom and human dignity can only come about as a result of the radical alteration of the structures and relationships that determine and often deny human dignity. In other words, it is only through social revolution that human rights can be realized.

The demands for clean water; safe and accessible food; free quality education; health-care and healthiness for all; housing; public transportation; wages and a socially productive job that allow for a dignified life; ending of mass incarceration; universal free child care; opposition to war and the control and eventual elimination of the police; self-determination; and respect for democracy in all aspects of life are some of the people-centered human rights that can only be realized through a bottom-up mass movement for building popular power.

By shifting the center of human rights struggle away from advocacy to struggle, Malcolm laid the foundation for a more relevant form of human rights struggle for people still caught in the tentacles of Euro-American colonial dominance. The PCHR approach that creates human rights from the bottom-up views human rights as an arena of struggle. Human rights does not emanate from legalistic texts negotiated by states—it comes from the aspirations of the people. Unlike the liberal conception of human rights that elevates some mystical notions of natural law (which is really bourgeois law) as the foundation of rights, the “people” in formation are the ethical foundation and source of PCHRs.

Trumpism is the logical outcome of the decades long assault of racialized neoliberal capitalism. Malcolm showed us how to deal with Trumpism, and the PCHR movement that we must build will move us to that place where collective humanity must arrive if we are to survive and build a new world. And we will – “by any means necessary.”

Ajamu Baraka was the 2016 candidate for vice president on the Green Party ticket. He is an editor and contributing columnist for the Black Agenda Report and contributing columnist for Counterpunch magazine. His latest publications include contributions to Killing Trayvons An Anthology of American Violence (Counterpunch Books, 2014), Imagine Living in a Socialist USA (HarperCollins, 2014) and Claim No Easy Victories The Legacy of Amilcar Cabral (CODESRIA, 2013). He can be reached at: www.AjamuBaraka.com.

EASTSIDE ARTS ALLIANCE

The Black Panther Party's Ten Point Program

1. We want freedom. We want power to determine the destiny of our Black and oppressed communities.

We believe that Black and oppressed people will not be free until we are able to determine our destinies in our own communities ourselves, by fully controlling all the institutions which exist in our communities.

2. We want full employment for our people.

We believe that the federal government is responsible and obligated to give every person employment or a guaranteed income. We believe that if the American businessmen will not give full employment, then the technology and means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living.

3. We want an end to the robbery by the capitalists of our Black and oppressed communities.

We believe that this racist government has robbed us and now we are demanding the overdue debt of 40 acres and two mules. Forty acres and two mules were promised 100 years ago as restitution for slave labor and mass murder of Black people. We will accept the payment in currency which will be distributed to our many communities. The American racist has taken part in the slaughter of over 50 million Black people. Therefore, we feel this is a modest demand that we make.

4. We want decent housing, fit for the shelter of human beings.

We believe that if the landlords will not give decent housing to our Black and oppressed communities, then housing and the land should be made into cooperatives so that the people in our communities, with government aid, can build and make decent housing for the people.

5. We want decent education for our people that exposes the true nature of this decadent American society. We want education that teaches us our true history and our role in the present-day society.

We believe in an educational system that will give to our people a knowledge of the self. If you do not have knowledge of yourself and your position in the society and in the world, then you will have little chance to know anything else.

6. We want completely free health care for all Black and oppressed people.

We believe that the government must provide, free of charge, for the people, health facilities which will not only treat our illnesses, most of which have come about as a result of our oppression, but which will also develop preventive medical programs to guarantee our future survival. We believe that mass health education and research programs must be developed to give all Black and oppressed people access to advanced scientific and medical information, so we may provide ourselves with proper medical attention and care.

7. We want an immediate end to police brutality and murder of Black people, other people of color, and all oppressed people inside the United States.

We believe that the racist and fascist government of the United States uses its domestic enforcement agencies to carry out its program of oppression against black people, other people of color and poor people inside the United States. We believe it is our right, therefore, to defend ourselves against such armed forces and that all Black and oppressed people should be armed for self-defense of our homes and communities against these fascist police forces.

8. We want an immediate end to all wars of aggression.

We believe that the various conflicts which exist around the world stem directly from the aggressive desire of the United States ruling circle and government to force its domination upon the oppressed people of the world. We believe that if the United States government or its lackeys do not cease these aggressive wars it is the right of the people to defend themselves by any means necessary against their aggressors.

9. We want freedom for all Black and oppressed people now held in U.S. federal, state, county, city and military prisons and jails. We want trials by a jury of peers for all persons charged with so-called crimes under the laws of this country.

We believe that the many Black and poor oppressed people now held in United States prisons and jails have not received fair and impartial trials under a racist and fascist judicial system and should be free from incarceration. We believe in the ultimate elimination of all wretched, inhuman penal institutions, because the masses of men and women imprisoned inside the United States or by the United States military are the victims of oppressive conditions which are the real cause of their imprisonment. We believe that when persons are brought to trial they must be guaranteed, by the United States, juries of their peers, attorneys of their choice and freedom from imprisonment while awaiting trial.

10. We want land, bread, housing, education, clothing, justice, peace, and people's community control of modern technology.

When, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and nature's God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation. We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that, whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes; and, accordingly, all experience hath shown that mankind are most disposed to suffer, while evils are sufferable, than to right themselves by abolishing the forms to which they are accustomed. But, when a long train of abuses and usurpation, pursuing invariably the same object, evinces a design to reduce them under absolute despotism, it is their right, it is their duty, to throw off such government, and to provide new guards for their future security.